

## Hitler's Third Reich – Issue 1

This page is to support the viewing of two-page within the .pdf viewer.

Originally published by Bright Star Publishing plc  
Dalling Road, LONDON W6 0ES

Originally produced by Midsummer Books Ltd  
Dalling Road, LONDON W6 0ES

This e-edition produced by  
[www.hitlersthirdreich.co.uk](http://www.hitlersthirdreich.co.uk)



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# HITLER'S Third Reich

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'Abwehr' to 'Axis Pact'

Publisher: Stan Morse  
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### Picture acknowledgements

1: Aerospace Publishing; 2-3: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Robert Hunt Library (bottom); 4-6: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek; 8: Robert Hunt Library; 9: AKG London, Robert Hunt Library; 10: US Holocaust Memorial Museum; 11: Aerospace Publishing, US Holocaust Memorial Museum; 12: Aerospace Publishing, AKG London; 13-15: Aerospace Publishing; 16: AKG London, AKG London; 17: AKG London, Topham (bottom right); 18: US Holocaust Memorial Museum, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, AKG London; 19: US Holocaust Memorial Museum; 20: US Holocaust Memorial Museum; 21: US Holocaust Memorial Museum, AKG London (bottom left); 22: US Holocaust Memorial Museum; 23: US Holocaust Memorial Museum; 24-27: US Holocaust Memorial Museum; 28: Aerospace Publishing; 29: Aerospace Publishing, AKG London; 30-35: Aerospace Publishing; 36: AKG London, Aerospace Publishing; 37-43: Aerospace Publishing; 44: AKG London (top), Aerospace Publishing; 45-48: Aerospace Publishing

Produced and published by  
Midsummer Books Ltd  
179, Dalling Road  
London NW 0ES  
©1998 Midsummer Books Ltd

Colour reproduction by  
Pixel Tech Pte Ltd, Singapore  
Printed in Italy by Officine Grafiche De Agostini

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Each volume including video series costs £5.95 Sterling (Ir£6.75)

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ISSN 1464-1976 (with video)  
ISSN 1464-1968 (without video)

# HITLER'S Third Reich

**Germany under Adolf Hitler changed the face of the modern world. In 12 years of Nazi rule, the Führer's black legions rose to dominate Europe before falling back into ruin, committing the most horrific crimes in history in the process.**

*Although he spoke with a peasant accent, Adolf Hitler was one of the greatest orators in history. His ability to sway a crowd was a key factor in his rise to power.*

ADOLF HITLER was the evil genius of the Third Reich, but there was much more to National Socialist Germany than one man, and **Hitler's Third Reich** uncovers every aspect of the Nazi Empire. Month by month you can explore the Führer state, from the petty jealousies and plotting at the top of the Nazi Party through the all-pervasive violence, corruption and persecution to the passive acceptance of horrific crimes by ordinary Germans.



Stormtroopers parade swastika banners at the 1933 Nuremberg Rally. This triumphant celebration was the first Party Day following Hitler's seizure of power.

## SECRET HITLER FILES

The Secret Hitler Files examine Hitler the man. They outline his origins and his personal devils, his bizarre relationships with women and his medical problems. Above all they explore the hatred of the Jews which led to the Holocaust.

## HITLER'S HENCHMEN

Hitler's Henchmen looks at the men who willingly followed their Führer into hell. Some were men of immense ability while others were opportunists, using the Nazi Party as a means of accumulating power. Many were bizarre characters, capable of terrible violence and truly horrifying evil, who were nevertheless completely mesmerised by the dictator

## NAZI HORRORS AND THE HOLOCAUST

Nazi Horrors and The Holocaust reveal the cruel and inhuman character of the Nazi State, as it perpetrated crimes against humanity unmatched in modern history.

## THE FUHRER STATE AND INSIDE THE THIRD REICH

The Fuhrer State and Inside the Third Reich look at how Germany was organised under the Nazis, describing how the party maintained power through the SS and the Gestapo. National Socialism spread its tentacles through every aspect of German life, from education and the arts to labour and religion, and ordinary Germans lived and worked under its shadow.

## HITLER'S WAR MACHINE AND HITLER'S BATTLES

Hitler's War Machine and Hitler's Battles describe the mighty military force created by the Nazis. The key campaigns of World War II are examined, showing how the Wehrmacht rose in triumph then collapsed into ultimate defeat.

*The Wehrmacht was the only body which could have stopped Hitler and the Nazis, but the prospect of re-armament and military triumph was enough of a bribe to ensure the support of the Generals.*





**D**t was a pretty strange affair from the start. She was Geli Raubal, a pretty 19-year-old Austrian girl. He was Adolf Hitler – at that time a 38-year-old radical politician – and Geli's uncle. A family affair, but one which was to become a dominant influence in Hitler's life, and one which was to have repercussions which would shake the world.

Their first meeting was in jail, after the failed attempt to take control of Bavaria by force in 1923. The 15-year-old Geli came to visit her famous – even notorious – relative with her mother. Little has been recorded of that meeting, or of the time she visited Munich on a school trip in 1925 when Hitler was too busy to spend much time with her.

Hitler was released from Landsberg prison in 1924, and by using his influence with various right-wing groups he managed to avoid being deported back to his native Austria. But he could not avoid being barred from public speaking. He realised that until he could campaign actively his political career and plans to oust Nazi rivals in northern Germany were on

hold, at least for the moment.

The future dictator decided to rent a house in the Bavarian Alps, in Obersalzberg near the border with Austria. Haus Wachenfeld was to become Hitler's first real home after years of living in hostels, barrack blocks and single rooms.

Hitler invited his half-sister Angela to become his cook and housekeeper. At the time she was living in straitened circumstances in Vienna – she had been widowed years before, and was struggling to make ends meet on a small widow's pension together with part-time work in the kitchen of a Jewish student's hostel. She moved into Haus Wachenfeld on 3 March 1927.

## ADOLF AND GELI

Angela had three children: Leo, the oldest, remained in Vienna. Seventeen-year-old Elfriede, a quiet, diffident girl, moved in with her mother. Angela, the middle child, who would stay temporarily until she had finished her schooling, taking her Abitur or school leaving certificate at the beginning of the summer. Having finished her exams, her uncle Adolf went to collect her from Vienna.

*"She was a brown-eyed brunette, about 170cm, well-built with a blooming appearance, full of animal spirits, and a pleasant voice. She had no inhibitions, and by nature she was open, very ready for a joke...she was extraordinarily self-possessed, sometimes inclined towards obstinacy"*

JULIUS SCHAUB

## HITLER'S ADJUTANT

That summer was to be one of the happiest of Hitler's life. Even though his political ban had been lifted and he had to work hard to extend his control of the National Socialists, he spent a good deal of time with his niece in the Alps. They had pet names for each other – she called him 'Uncle Alf' or 'Uncle Wolf' and he called her his princess.

Hitler was the first to call her Geli, possibly to avoid confusion with his half sister, and it was clear to all of his acquaintances and followers that the young girl had made a huge impression on the otherwise solitary party leader.

Baldur von Schirach, one of Hitler's inner circle and who was to go on to become Reich Youth Leader and governor of Vienna was a regular visitor to Haus Wachenfeld.

## A FAMILY AFFAIR

Angela Raubal was Hitler's widowed half-sister – a child of Alois Hitler's second marriage to Franziska Matzelsberger, born in 1883. Hitler, born in 1889, was from Alois' third marriage to Klara Pöhlz.

Hitler had few contacts with his family after leaving home in 1907. He had been a failed artist, a tramp, a soldier in the First World War, a political activist, a revolutionary in the Munich Putsch of 1923, and a prisoner following the Putsch.

While imprisoned in the Landsberg fortress, he was visited by his half-sister Angela,

together with her children: her son Leo, and 15-year-old Angela, known as Geli.

In 1927, banned from public speaking after his prison term, Hitler decided to move out of his squalid room in Munich, and rented a large chalet in the Alps, at Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden.

Hitler invited Angela to be his housekeeper, and she moved in March. In the summer they were joined by the now 19-year-old Geli, a lively and attractive girl who immediately caught the attention of her 38-year-old 'Uncle Alf'.



Angela and Geli Raubal celebrate Geli's birthday at Hitler's Haus Wachenfeld in Berchtesgaden.

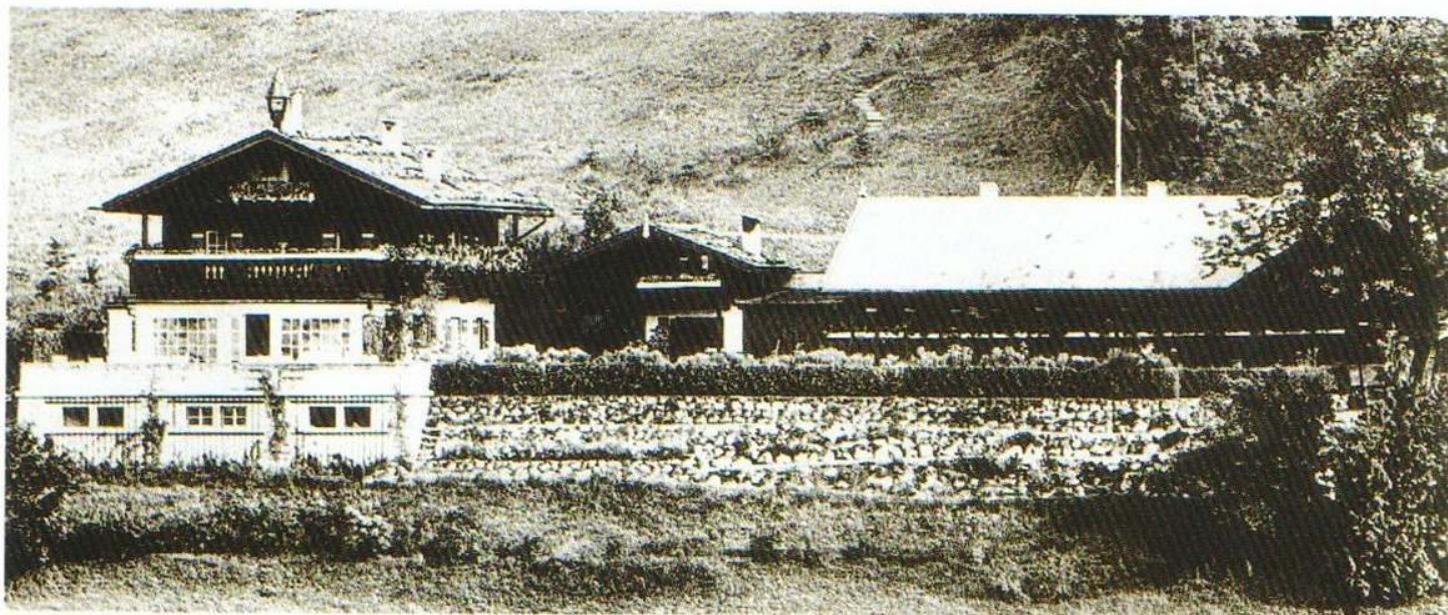
# Did Hitler murder Geli?

Adolf Hitler had only one real love in his life – his niece Geli. Much younger than Hitler, she was a lively girl, so her death came as a great shock to all who knew her. But why did she die? Was she driven to suicide by the perverted sexual demands her 'uncle Alf'? Or was she murdered in a jealous rage by the future dictator?

Geli was the most important woman in Hitler's life. She was one of the few people with whom the future dictator could behave like a normal human being. Her death was to drive the Führer to the brink of (possibly guilt-induced) insanity, and would have a permanent effect on his already strange character.



HITLER'S THIRD REICH



Above: Haus Wachenfeld at Berchtesgaden started out as a typical Bavarian mountain home, but it was considerably enlarged after Hitler came to power in 1933.

"We liked her. When she was there, Hitler almost never started on the dreadful and often agonising sequence of endless monologues and uninhibited recriminations he bestowed not only on political enemies but also on friends and fellow 'alte kampfer'. Geli's presence allowed him to relax. In front of favoured guests he let her perform her speciality act – when she called, a mountain jackdaw she had nursed through a broken wing would fly in through the window – and he enjoyed seeing her play with his Alsatians Blöndi and Mück. Geli was allowed to laugh at her 'Uncle Alf', and adjust his tie when it came loose. She was not forced to be

particularly clever and witty. She could be just what she was – lively and uncomplicated."

## GOING TO MUNICH

Geli might have thought that Haus Wachenfeld would be her home, but Hitler had other ideas. In October 1927 she moved out of Obersalzberg and into a furnished room in Munich's Königinstrasse. The ostensible reason was so that she could register as a medical student, but there is little evidence that she ever took her studies seriously. It is more likely that Hitler, who by now was besotted with his niece, wanted her out of Haus Wachenfeld and far from the watchful eye of her mother.

The change in Hitler's life seemed immense, especially to those of his followers

who had only seen him as the fanatic driving force behind the Nazi Party. Geli loved picnics, and her 'Uncle Alf' happily went along with her passion. They both liked the cinema, and their tastes were similarly unsophisticated – in later life, one of the Führer's favourite films was 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs', and he would often whistle another Disney favourite 'Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf'.

She accompanied him to the opera and to the theatre, while he willingly went along on her shopping trips – she particularly loved shopping for hats. Henriette Hoffmann, daughter of Hitler's personal photographer Heinrich Hoffmann, said that "she exercised the sweet tyranny of youth, and he liked it".

But Hitler's driver, Emil Maurice, had a different view. "He was obviously embarrassed at having to follow Geli, laden with gift-wrapped parcels." Emil Maurice was to have a larger part to play in the story of Adolf and Geli, however.

## MOVING IN

In 1929, Hitler finally moved out of the single room in which he had been living, and took a fashionable nine-room apartment on one of Munich's most exclusive squares, the Prinzregentenplatz. He moved Geli into the flat, though for appearances sake he let it be known she was staying at another apartment in the same building.

Just what sort of relationship the rising politician had with his niece is open to speculation. There was undoubtedly an intense and bizarre sexual element in their dealings, if not from the early days in Obersalzberg then certainly by the time Geli moved to Munich.



Left: Hitler's relationship with Geli coincided with a rise in the fortunes of the Nazi Party. He is seen here at the 1927 Nuremberg Party rally, soon after collecting Geli from Vienna. Increasingly busy with preparations for elections early in 1928, the future leader of Germany had less time to spare for trips to Berchtesgaden, so he moved his niece to Munich where she settled into the Pension Klein at Königinstrasse 43. Later she was to move in with Hitler.

# Weird Games with 'Uncle Alf'

## Masochism, sadism or love?

Just what was it that Adolf Hitler did which so disgusted his young lover?

When the US Army produced a psychological profile of Hitler during World War II, it drew heavily on the memories of Otto Strasser, brother of Hitler's early Nazi rival Gregor Strasser and a good friend of Geli's.

Geli told Strasser that Hitler was pretty much impotent, and could only gain sexual gratification by a combination of violence to and being humiliated by a woman. He was also a voyeur, and liked drawing pictures of female genitals.

Hitler's abasement went as far as stripping naked and being kicked and beaten. But it did not stop there: Strasser claimed that Hitler's greatest pleasure was in being urinated and even defecated upon by his lover.

Strasser is hardly a reputable witness, since he was a long-time opponent of Hitler's, but a number of people who were in Munich at the time of the affair have confirmed some of his story. These included Putzi Haenfstaengl, an early friend of the Führer's and one who knew Geli well.

"What particular combination of arguments her uncle used to bend Geli to his will, presumably with the tacit acquiescence of his half-sister, we shall never know.

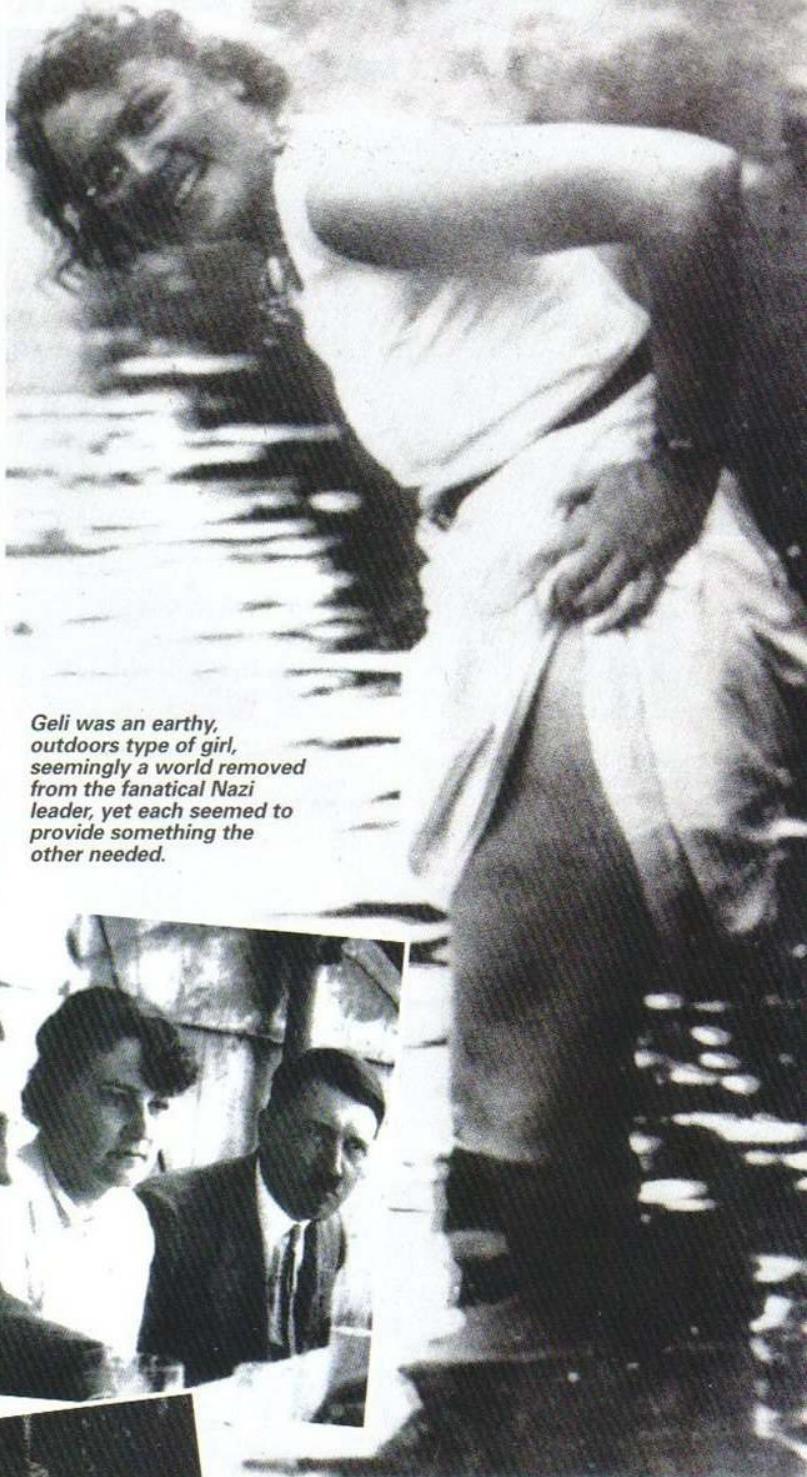
"Whether he assumed that a young woman who was already no saint might be brought fairly easily to submit to his peculiar tastes, or whether in fact she was the one woman in his life who went some way towards curing his impotence and half

making a man out of him, again we shall never know.

"On the evidence available, I incline to the former view. What is certain is that the services she was prepared to render had the effect of making him behave like a man in love. She went round very well dressed at his expense, or, more probably, at the Party's, as a lot of resentment was expressed, and he hovered at her elbow with a moon-calf look in his eyes in a very plausible imitation of adolescent infatuation."

Haenfstaengl had a good idea of the kind of things Hitler expected from his niece.

"[Hitler] emphasised some threat against his opponents by cracking the heavy dog whip which in those days he carried all the time. I happened to catch a glimpse of Geli's face as he did it, and there was on it such a look of mingled fear and loathing that I almost caught my breath. Whips as well, I thought, and really felt sorry for the girl. She had displayed no sign of affection for him in the restaurant and seemed bored, looking over her shoulder at the other tables, and I could not help feeling that her share in the relationship was under compulsion."



Geli was an earthy, outdoors type of girl, seemingly a world removed from the fanatical Nazi leader, yet each seemed to provide something the other needed.

Above left: Josef Goebbels met Geli soon after switching loyalty to Hitler's wing of the Nazis. He found Geli extremely attractive, and propositioned her before he found out that his leader had a prior claim. According to his diaries, Geli was not averse to a relationship, but Goebbels did not pursue the matter further.

Left: Despite any sexual problems, Geli was happy with Hitler in their early years together, especially when they spent long periods in the country. He was an up and coming political leader, and she liked the reflected power that brought to her. When asked why she pandered to his needs when it made her unhappy, she said "if I don't, some other woman will. And then I'll lose him."





Above: Hitler's half-sister Angela must have known what was going on between her brother and her daughter, but she did nothing to interfere with the relationship.

Hitler was besotted by Geli, and was ferociously jealous. She found the restrictions placed on her activities irksome, but at the same time was happy to have the attention of such an important man. She in turn resented Hitler's relations with other women, who included Winifred Wagner. In spite of her jealousy, when Hitler was away, which was with increasing frequency, she managed to find other amusements.



Above: Geli might have been a country girl, but she had an expensive taste for fashion. It was a taste in which Hitler indulged her.



Above: Hitler feeds a Jackdaw on the terrace at Berchtesgaden. It had been tamed by Geli and trained to come when she called, and after her death the Führer treated it as a venerated relic of his beloved niece.

## GELI'S AFFAIRS

Her lovers included Hitler's chauffeur Emil Maurice, who had joined the Party in 1919 at the same time as his employer. Maurice wanted to marry Geli, but when the Nazi leader pressured his half-sister to refuse parental permission, he broke with Hitler. Wilhelm Stocker, one of Hitler's SA guards, was another lover.

*"When Hitler was away for a few days, on political affairs or attending Party rallies, Geli would associate with other men. I liked her, so I never told anyone where she went or what she did on those nights of freedom. Hitler would have been furious if he had known she was out with a violin player from Augsburg or a ski instructor from Innsbruck. After she was satisfied that I would not tell her uncle – and I had a personal reason for not telling him – she confided in me.*

*She admitted to me that in private Hitler made her do things that sickened her, but when I asked her why she didn't protest she just shrugged and said that she didn't want to lose him to some other woman who would do what he wanted...She was a girl who needed constant attention, yet at the same time she would do anything to remain Hitler's favourite girlfriend."*

It is clear that by 1930, the relationship was under considerable strain. That was the year when over six million Germans voted for the National Socialists, which Hitler by now was in near absolute control of. His political ambitions meant that he was away more and more – and yet he still wanted matching control over his niece.

In the summer of 1931 Geli decided she wanted to go back to Vienna to train as a singer. Otto Strasser, brother of Hitler's chief



Above: Geli loved dogs, a passion she shared with Hitler whose favourite pets were the Alsatians called Blondi and Muck.

rival in the party, witnessed one fairly violent argument about the subject.

*"Geli seemed to have won the argument, but her eyes were red with weeping. His face stony, Hitler stood in the doorway as we left the house to climb into the waiting taxi. We spent a very pleasant, high-spirited evening. Geli seemed to enjoy having escaped from his supervision for once. On the way back from Schwabing to Prinzregentenplatz, we went for a walk in the Englischer Garten. At the top of the Chinese Tower, Geli sat down on a bench and started to weep bitterly. In the end she told me that she really loved Hitler, but she couldn't bear it any longer.*

# Suicide or Murder

What really happened the night that Geli died?

*His jealousy wasn't the worst thing. He demanded things from her that were simply disgusting. She had never dreamed that such things could happen. When I asked her to tell me, she described things I had previously encountered in my reading of Krafft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis when I was a student."*

## GELI USES HITLER'S GUN

On September 17, after yet another argument, Hitler left to go on a political trip to Hamburg. The next morning, Geli was found dead in her room, a bullet in her chest and with Hitler's small Walther semi-automatic pistol lying by her body.

Hitler was almost prostrate with grief, Gregor Strasser several times having to prevent him from taking his own life. It was a key moment in the dictator's life. For as long as he lived, he kept Geli's room untouched, as a shrine.

Sordid and personal though it may have been, the suicide was also a key moment in world history, since Hitler would never love a woman in the same way again. From Geli's death onwards, all of his demonic energies would be devoted to his cause, with incalculable results for the rest of the world.

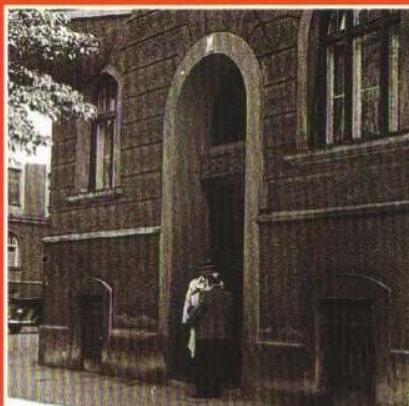


**T**here is a good deal of mystery surrounding Geli's death. Her friend, Henriette von Schirach was certain it was suicide – an act performed by a desperate woman who saw no way out of a cage, and one designed to hurt the uncle she had come to hate. Yet if it was suicide, why did officials from the Nazi Party headquarters rush to Hitler's flat on hearing about the shooting? What were they attempting to cover up when they delayed informing the police about the incident? Why did the initial police report say that Geli's nose was broken and that her body was badly bruised, yet a later report stated that apart from the

death wound, there were no other injuries?

Above all, where was Hitler when Geli died? The official story was that he was in a Nuremberg hotel, on his way to a meeting of Nazi Gauleiters in Hamburg. Yet according to Munich newspaper editor Fritz Gerlich, who investigated the case thoroughly, Hitler and Geli had spent the evening of the suicide in a restaurant in Munich. They had stayed until one in the morning. Unusually, Hitler had been drinking beer, and the couple had been arguing. Gerlich believed that Hitler had been present when the shot was fired.

Gerlich amassed a good deal of evidence that Geli was about to leave Hitler, and he also spoke to one of the police detectives investigating the case. He was certain that Hitler had pulled the



Above: Hitler leaves his flat in Prinzregentenplatz, the site of Geli's death.

trigger, but a 'police decision' had been made to call it suicide.

Intriguingly, Gerlich was arrested and sent to Dachau once the Nazis came to power, and was murdered during the Night of the Long Knives in 1934. Coincidence? Or simply removing a man who knew too much?

## Münchener Post

A 23-year-old music student, a niece of Hitler's, has shot herself in a flat on Prinzregentenplatz. For two years the girl had been living in a furnished room in a flat on the same floor on which Hitler's flat was situated. What drove the student to kill herself is still unknown.

She was Angela Raubal, the daughter of Hitler's half-sister. On Friday 18 September there was once again a violent quarrel between Herr Hitler and his niece. What was the reason?

The vivacious 23-year-old music student, Geli, wanted to go to Vienna, she wanted to become engaged. Hitler was strongly opposed to this. The two of them had recurrent disagreements about it. After a violent scene, Hitler left his flat on the second floor of 16 Prinzregentenplatz.

On Saturday 19 September it was reported that Fraulein Geli had been found shot in the flat with Hitler's gun in her hand. The dead woman's nose was broken, and there were other serious injuries on the body. From a letter to a female friend living in Vienna, it is clear that Fraulein Geli had the firm intention of going to Vienna. The letter was never posted.

The mother of the girl, a half-sister of Herr Hitler, lives in Berchtesgaden; she was summoned to Munich. Gentlemen from the Brown House then conferred on what should be published about the motive for the suicide. It was agreed that Geli's death should be explained in terms of frustrated artistic ambitions.

Above: Hitler's study in the Prinzregentenplatz apartment. The Führer kept a photo of Geli on his desk for the rest of his life. He certainly felt a great deal of guilt over her death. But was it guilt over driving her to suicide? Or did the guilt he felt arise from a much darker, murderous secret?

*"It was I who buried Angela Raubal. They pretended that she committed suicide; I should never have allowed a suicide to be buried in consecrated ground. From the fact that I gave her Christian burial you can draw conclusions which I cannot communicate to you."*

FATHER JOSEF PANT

# Auschwitz

## Death Camp Selection

**Hitler and the Nazis were responsible for an almost unbelievable catalogue of atrocities, but the horrors above all horrors were the extermination camps like Auschwitz, which were true factories of death.**

**N**AZI GENOCIDE began, as it ended, with a lie. Jews had to pay for their one-way tickets to the gas chambers: all their possessions were taken by the Gestapo as a 'contribution' to the expense of 're-settling' them in eastern Europe: they were allowed to keep up to 40 Reichsmarks and 50 kg of personal possessions.

European Jews had already been taken from their homes and

businesses and forced to live in designated ghettos. Once genocide was decided upon, these were emptied as *abgeschoben* ('evacuation') began.

The trains carrying the deportees made their way across Europe, the journey taking up to a week. There was no water, no heating, no food and no toilets. For the weakest – babies and the elderly – the journey itself was often fatal. By the time the train reached Auschwitz, the

conditions inside the freight cars were revolting. The doors were flung back, and survivors needed little urging to get out onto a wooden ramp. They left bodies behind in almost every wagon, covered in excrement.

Deportees were marched towards a group of SS men, including a medical officer. These directed the bewildered Jews into two lines: they did not know it but one line meant work and life (for the moment) and one meant death.



### "You go that way..."



**Arrival at Auschwitz** Deportees came from all over occupied Europe. Trains usually held two or three thousand victims, and took up to a week to make the journey. Under the fiction that they were being resettled, each deportee was allowed between 30 and 60 kilos of luggage.

**On the Ramp** By the time the train reached Auschwitz, the conditions inside the freight cars were revolting. There was little food other than any the deportees had brought, no water, no heating and no toilets. Once the doors were flung back, the deportees needed little urging to get out.



# 20 minutes to live

Children and old people were not at Auschwitz for long. Those not capable of productive labour went straight from the freight cars direct to their deaths.

Somewhere between one in four and one in ten of the deportees in a typical transport were considered fit to work. Those unable to walk – too old, or too weak, or too ill – were told to wait by the rail cars for the trucks which would transport them to their destination.

All were told that their baggage would be brought along later.

*Left: A little girl stares at the camera, not knowing that she is experiencing the last moments of her life. Part of the huge transport of Hungarian Jews which arrived at Auschwitz in the summer of 1944, these women are waiting their turn outside the gas chamber: they have less than half an hour to live.*



**Separation of Sexes** On leaving the train, the deported Jews were divided into two columns: males to one side, women and children to the other. This is one of hundreds of such trainloads sent to Auschwitz from Hungary in 1944, a year which saw more than 400,000 Hungarian Jews killed in Birkenau's gas chambers.

**Dead on Arrival** For the weakest – babies, children and the elderly – the journey itself was often fatal. Bodies were left in almost every wagon, often covered in excrement. After being stripped and looted these pitiful remnants were removed for cremation by special squads of prisoners.



# THE HOLOCAUST



**"The boxcars were forced open and the SS guards stormed in. Shouting wildly, they prodded us with rifle butts and bayonets and beat us with clubs."**

**Doctor Alfred Balachowski  
Auschwitz survivor**

News of what was happening at the death camps had leaked out, however, and Rudolf Höss, the commandant of Auschwitz for much of the war, was concerned to avoid the inevitable problems where the victims suspected that they were going to be killed. "Very frequently," he said at his trial after the war, "women would hide their children under their clothes."

The slightest resistance triggered a beating from the SS guards. Whips, pick-axe handles and rifle butts were wielded without regard to gender or age,

but though the guards took sadistic pleasure out of their work it wasted too much time. So to head off any trouble Höss told the Auschwitz victims that they were being de-loused. He conceded that "the foul stench from the continuous burning of bodies which permeated the entire area" made the fiction hard to sustain, but the Nazis' Jewish helpers, the kapos of the SS Sonderkommando assured them that this was the truth.

"They might refuse to believe the SS men, but they had complete faith in members of their own race." The kapos were doing the job to survive: they received better rations and more comfortable clothes than their fellow prisoners. Those that refused – and there were many – were killed immediately, and even those that did the job only put off their deaths for a few weeks: they were themselves gassed, or shot in obscure railway sidings later.

## FAMILIES TORN APART

So a queue assembled. Women, invalids, nursing mothers, elderly people, smaller children, and fathers and husbands who



guessed what was happening and refused to be separated. Höss had discovered that the larger gas chambers made for faster killing: his four could hold up to 2,000 people each, ten times the capacity of earlier models.

At first the condemned were forced to undress in a nearby wooded area, from where they were directed to the 'showers'. They were told to put their clothes in neat piles, so that they would find them easily after their

*Above: The sign over the entrance to the original camp at Auschwitz read 'Work makes you free' – a sentiment not out of place on the wall of a Calvinist home, but a sickening lie in a place where the only escape was death.*

shower. Sometimes the women were shorn of their hair, though this was more often done after death. Then the naked procession entered the subterranean gas chamber itself. When they were squeezed in, the last SS men and kapos left the chamber and the

## "You aren't fit to work..."'



**To Live or Die** Deportees were marched towards an SS medical officer, who directed the bewildered Jews into two lines. The victims did not know it, but those sent to the right were destined for work and life – for the moment; those sent to the left (above) faced immediate death in the gas chamber.

**Slave Labourers** Fit victims had their heads shaved and their belongings taken before being marched to the barrack blocks at Birkenau – passing the crematoria on the way. Many would be moved on to Auschwitz I and Auschwitz III. On average, slave labourers lived for about nine months.



doors shut. Höss thought it a reassuring sign if the guards were inside until the last moment.

Through glass portholes in the doors, the guards watched what happened as one of their comrades dropped Zyklon-B crystals down wire lattice shafts from roof vents. When exposed to moisture, the crystals dissolved, releasing cyanide gas. Once inhaled, cyanide combines with the red blood cells, preventing them carrying oxygen around the body. The body tries to compensate by directing blood only to the vital organs, so extremities – lips, hands, feet – turn blue. Only 205 parts per million are required to kill.

### POISON GAS

Anybody the wrong side of the glass now knew their fate: the guards had donned gas masks. People next to the shafts died in minutes as the crystals dissolved in the warm sweaty interior of the chamber. The last hands pressed against the door relaxed their grip after no more than 20 minutes. To be on the safe side, the doors were not opened until at least half-an-hour after the gas

**"Fifty metres away, on the railway platform, I could see the selection being done. Sometimes it was the doctor; sometimes it was his chauffeur. They sent men, women and children to the crematory, never to be seen again. On days like this the ovens operated day and night, and the smoke from burning flesh permeated everything. In two months they cremated nearly half a million men, women and children."**

**Violette Rambaud  
Auschwitz survivor**

was introduced.

The ventilation system was turned on, and the bodies removed by the kapos. The 'tooth commandos' got to work with their pliers, tugging out gold teeth and crowns which were turned into ingots. Contrary to legend, they were not used to enrich the Reich's gold reserves, since dental gold is much less pure than regular bullion. Most was returned to Germany for recycling by dentists treating SS men and their families.

The corpses were then burned in a series of ovens. The biggest, crematories II and III, could burn 2,000 in 24 hours. Höss thought

6000 a day in total was the best achievable with his equipment, but German companies competed to design improved models. Only the advance of the Soviet army prevented semi-automated crematoria being installed.

Regular de-sludging was necessary to remove accumulated human fat. A Danzig-based company developed a way of making soap from the remains – 12 pounds of fat boiled in 10 quarts of water with 8 oz of

caustic soda for a couple of hours – though this was never actually done commercially. Running at full power too long generated excessive heat and damaged the grates. The ashes were shovelled into trucks, driven to the Vistula river, and tipped in.

### CAMPS OF DEATH

The first dedicated extermination camp was built at Belzec, near Lublin, its gas chambers using diesel fumes from old tank engines. Others were established elsewhere in Poland at Sobibor, Treblinka and Majdanek. But Auschwitz, an old army barracks in Upper East Silesia (now Oswiecim, Poland) was the biggest of them all.

At its most extensive, Auschwitz consisted of several different camps. The original one at Auschwitz was built for Polish political prisoners but was expanded into a slave labour camp for Jews, gypsies and 'Asiatic inferiors' – captured Russian soldiers.

Workers – even slaves – have to be fit to do the job. The unfit and the unwanted went to the adjacent facility at Birkenau, or



**Collecting Loot** Soon the ramp was deserted, except for the SS guards, their prison helpers and the piles of luggage left behind by the victims. Some of the Sonderkommandos were tasked with sorting through the baggage looking for food, while others loaded lorries to take the loot to sorting and storage sites.

**Music to Die by** There were lawns and flower-beds around the gas chambers, together with large signs saying 'Baths'. The Auschwitz orchestra played as slave labourers left the camp in the mornings, and those selected to die sometimes went to their deaths to the tune of Viennese operetta.



# THE HOLOCAUST



**"We had to unload the boxcars not just of suitcases, but also the dead and dying. The dead – and that included anybody who could not stand – were tossed in a pile. The suitcases and packages were gathered up and the boxcars were scrubbed down so that no trace remained of their hideous contents."**

**Eyewitness statement  
Auschwitz Report, US War Refugee Board**

Auschwitz II, which in addition to being a huge labour and concentration camp was also the primary death camp. About 300,000 adults and 500,000 children were put to death in Birkenau's four specially-built gas chambers. The exact number of victims will never be known as the records were destroyed when the camp was blown up in 1945. But the majority were women and children.

## SLAVE LABOUR

At Monowitz – Auschwitz III – the inmates worked in a number of factories owned by major German industrial concerns including the chemical giant IG Farben. There was a cement plant, a coal mine, a shoe factory

and one for producing synthetic rubber. Auschwitz III also controlled as many as 50 satellite camps all over the industrial area of Upper Silesia.

There was a fourth sector of the camp complex, known to the inmates as 'Kanada' because it was a world of plenty. Consisting of more than 30 warehouses, it was used to store, sort and dispatch loot back to Germany.

Fifteen-year-old Eva Schloss was selected to work there and found "huge piles of clothing, great mounds of shoes waiting to be sorted and one heap, taller than my head, of metal and glass. As I drew nearer I saw it was made up of thousands of

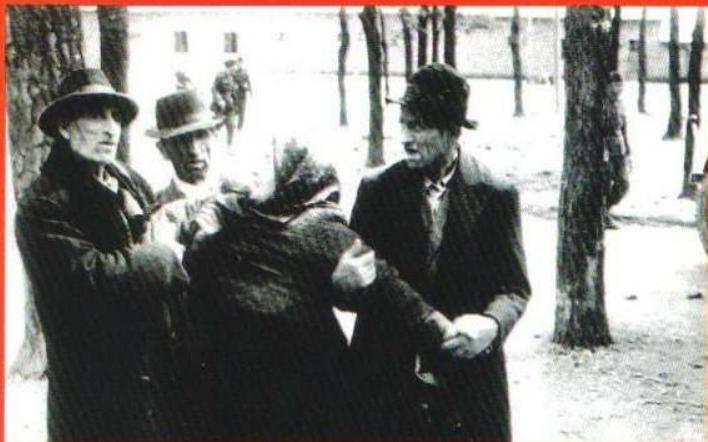
# LOOTING THE DEAD Profiting from Genocide

**P**art of the Auschwitz complex was known to the kapos who worked there as 'Kanada' – in the dreams of the despairing prisoners, Canada was a faraway, almost mythical land of opportunity and plenty, and this section of the camp offered the only opportunities for enrichment. Loot ranged from clothing, shoes, bedlinen, towels and table cloths through household utensils, scissors, razors, and flashlights to money, gold, jewelry, wristwatches and fountain pens. Many of the watches were issued to front-line SS soldiers, Luftwaffe pilots and U-boat crews. Precise figures on the value of the loot seized in the extermination camps have never been assessed, but it is estimated that the Nazi state profited from genocide to the tune of several hundred million Reichsmarks.

*Officially known as Effectenkammern or Effektenlager (storage chambers or dumps) 'Kanada' came to include six barrack blocks in Auschwitz I and 30 blocks in Birkenau. Goods taken from the ramp were trucked to the storage area where they were sorted.*



## "Now you must shower..."



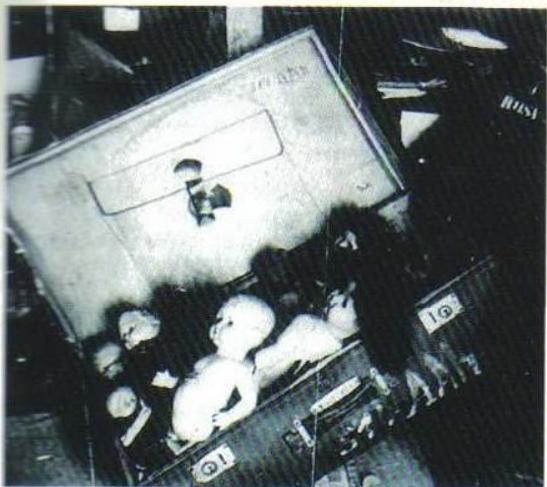
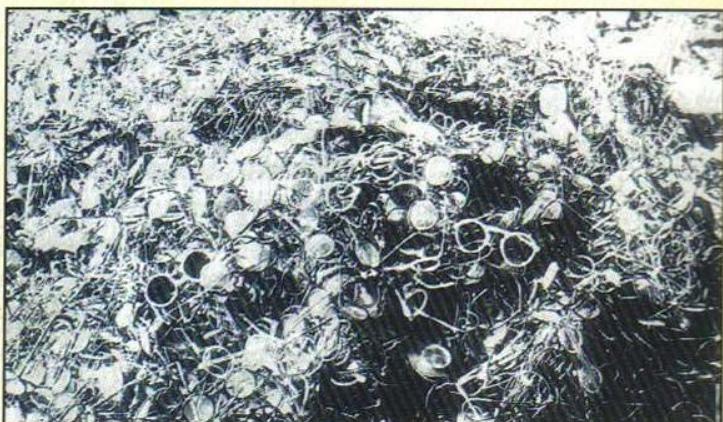
**Resistance is Futile** Elderly Jewish men support an old woman whose strength has given out after the 900-metre walk from the ramp. They only have minutes to live: the building in the background is gas chamber/crematorium IV and within moments the SS men approaching will order them to strip and enter the 'showers'.

**Running to the Gas Chamber** A photo taken clandestinely by one of the prisoners working with the Sonderkommandos shows Jews being herded to the gas chamber. Forced to undress in a nearby wooded area, the victims were told to put their clothes in neat piles, "so that they would find them easily afterwards".





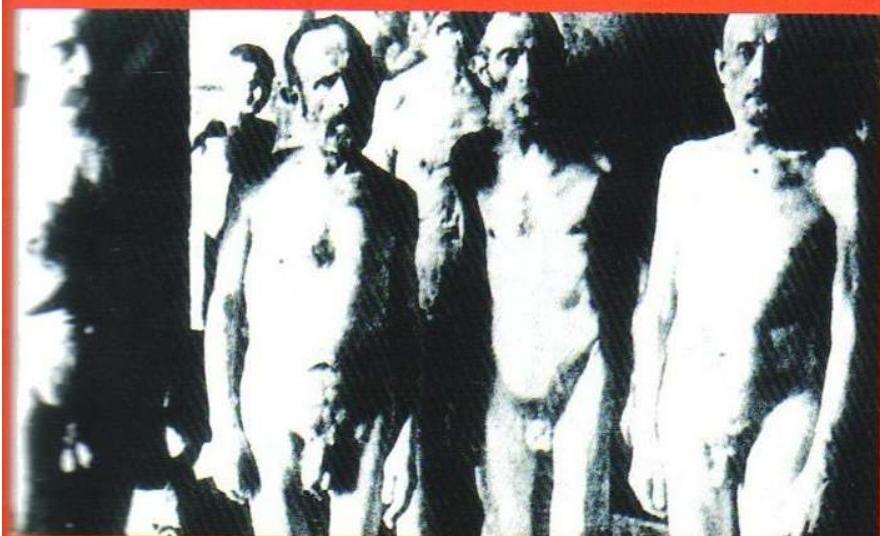
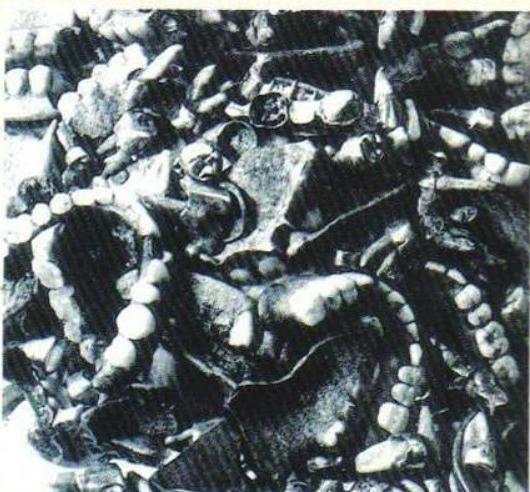
**LEFT:** Soviet troops liberating Auschwitz discovered 293 sacks marked K.L. Au (which was the abbreviation for Konzentrationslager Auschwitz). They contained nearly six tonnes of human hair, much of which retained traces of the cyanide gas which had killed those from whom it had been shorn. Concentration camp hair was used to manufacture felt, thread, ropes, cords, haircloth and mattresses, as well as felt stockings for pilots and U-boat crews.



**Above right:** Among the mountains of loot discovered at Auschwitz by the Soviets were large quantities of personal items like toothbrushes, watches, and spectacles.

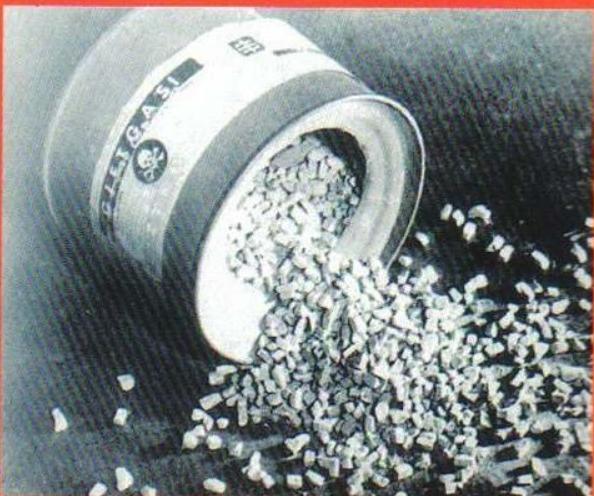
**Right:** Gold and other precious metals were removed from the teeth of victims and sent to the SS Sanitätshauptamt, or main Sanitation office. False teeth were also taken to be re-used

**Left:** The scale of the looting was stunning: although the Nazis burned down most of the warehouses before the Soviets arrived, the six remaining contained thousands of suitcases, tens of thousands of pairs of shoes, and more than a million items of clothing.



**Moments from death** The naked victims descended into the underground gas chamber. When it was full, the last SS men and kapos left the chamber – the camp commandant thought it reassuring if the guards were inside until the last moment – and watched through portholes in the sealed doors.

**Poison** Guards wearing gas masks dropped Zyklon-B crystals down wire lattice shafts from roof vents. The crystals released cyanide in the warm, sweaty interior of the chamber, and people close to the poison died quickly. Those further away lived longer – but the last hands fighting to get out relaxed their grip on the door after no more than 20 minutes.



# THE HOLOCAUST



pairs of spectacles. It still did not dawn on me why they were no longer needed by their owners."

Auschwitz was chosen as the site of the biggest death camp mainly because it was easily reached by rail. Jews and other victims were assembled in every Nazi-occupied country, crammed into wagons in which there was barely enough room to stand, and shipped to Auschwitz.

## MASS MURDER

Massacres by 'conventional' means – primarily mass shootings over open graves – had been taking place all over Eastern Europe since the outbreak of World War II. But they were inefficient. Digging graves deep enough for dozens or even hundreds of bodies took a long time and large numbers of SS guards were needed. Portable gas chambers had been tried, using engine exhausts and sealed vans, but they did not address the

*Below: Between 15 May and 9 July 1944, 147 trains carried over 430,000 Hungarian Jewish deportees from 55 locations in Hungary to Auschwitz. Most were gassed on arrival, as many as 12,000 being murdered per day.*

**"I had been in the camp two or three weeks when a group of about 200 Belgian Jews appeared. They were taken immediately to the gas chambers. Among them was one young woman of exceptional beauty who was holding a child of about three in her arms. The SS guard looked her over and said: 'Come with me to the barracks and I will postpone your fate a few hours.' Instead of an answer, the young woman pointed to the child in her arms. 'That's not what I have in mind,' cried the guard, tearing the child out of the mother's arms. The child began to laugh, thinking that the officer wanted to play, and leaned forward, apparently intending to give the German a kiss. Without a moment's hesitation, the SS guard swung the child in a wide arc and smashed its head against the concrete wall. The child didn't even have time to cry out. In a rage, the young mother snatched the pistol from the holster on the German's belt and managed to shoot him and several other SS officers before they finally overpowered her and tortured her to death in the anteroom of the gas chamber."**

**Eyewitness statement  
Soviet Report on Auschwitz,  
July 1945**

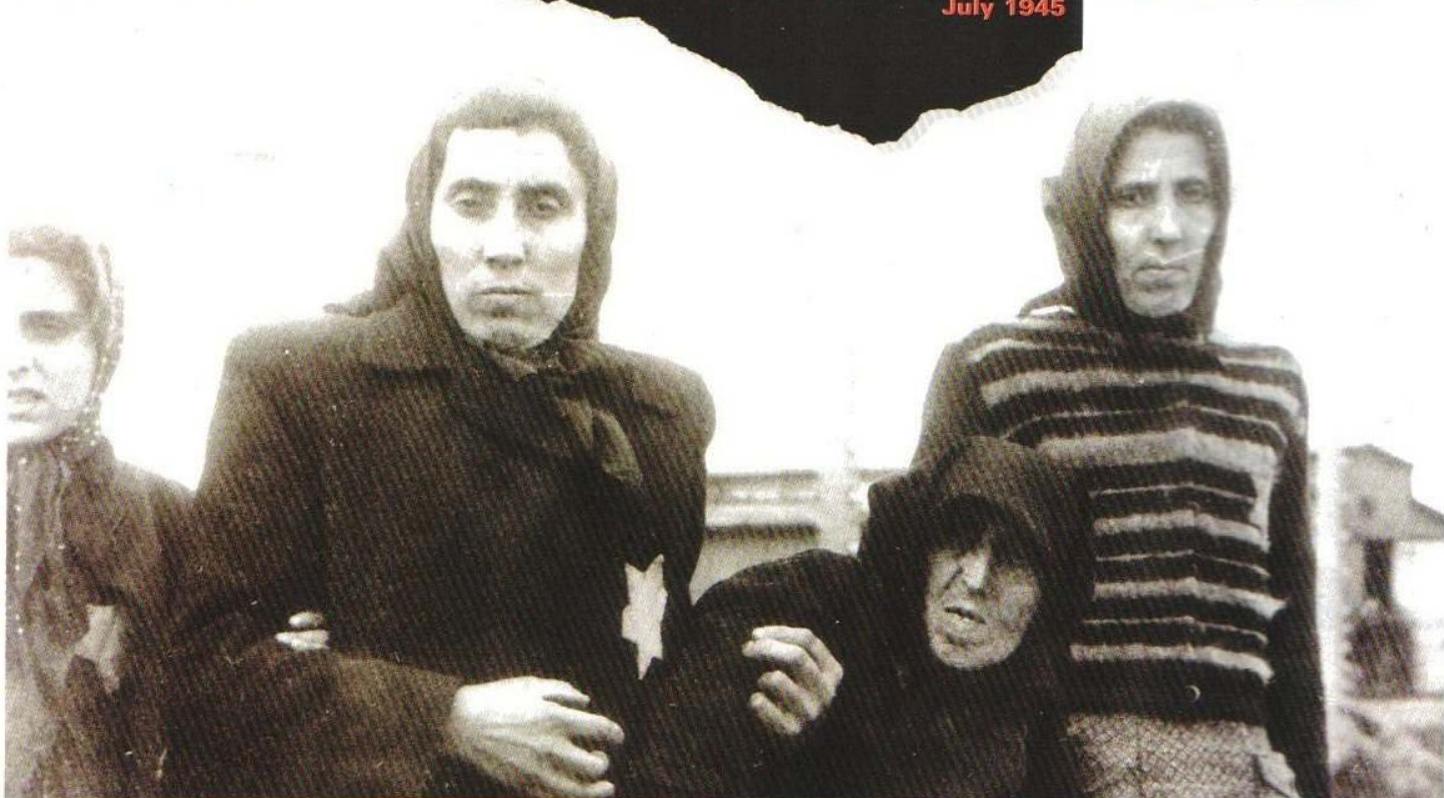
problems of handling the bodies.

Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler had also learned that even his black-shirted fanatics found the experience distressing. It was one thing to cheer Hitler's racist speeches, but the nauseating reality of mass murder was more than all but the most hardened of Nazi killers could stomach.

Above all, these methods were slow. Although the Einsatzgruppen death squads killed an estimated 100,000 Jews a month between June 1941 and January 1942, there were eleven million Jews in Europe. At this rate it would take 12–15 years to kill them all. Clearly something more was needed, something on an industrial scale.

## CHAMBERS OF DEATH

The concept of the gas chamber dates back to before the war. In the summer of 1939, Dr Karl Brandt initiated a secret Nazi program code-named *Aktion T-4*. Physically handicapped people, mental patients and children born with serious deformities had no place in Hitler's Germany. The Nazi leadership were firm



# THE GENOCIDE FACTORY



*Above: Elderly Jews wait for death. In any one transport the percentage selected for labour – whose final fate was postponed rather than imminent – fluctuated between 15 and 25 per cent.*

believers in eugenics: by purging the Aryan race of such 'inferior stock', the German people would become fitter and stronger as befitting the master race. The victims even included former soldiers, injured fighting for Germany in World War I.

Selected 'sub-humans' were taken to one of six asylums which had been fitted with new 'shower rooms'. There they were helped to undress, given some soap and taken inside. The 'shower heads' disgorged carbon monoxide gas instead of water, and the victims fell into a sleep from which they could never awaken. The bodies were wheeled to the adjacent crematoria.

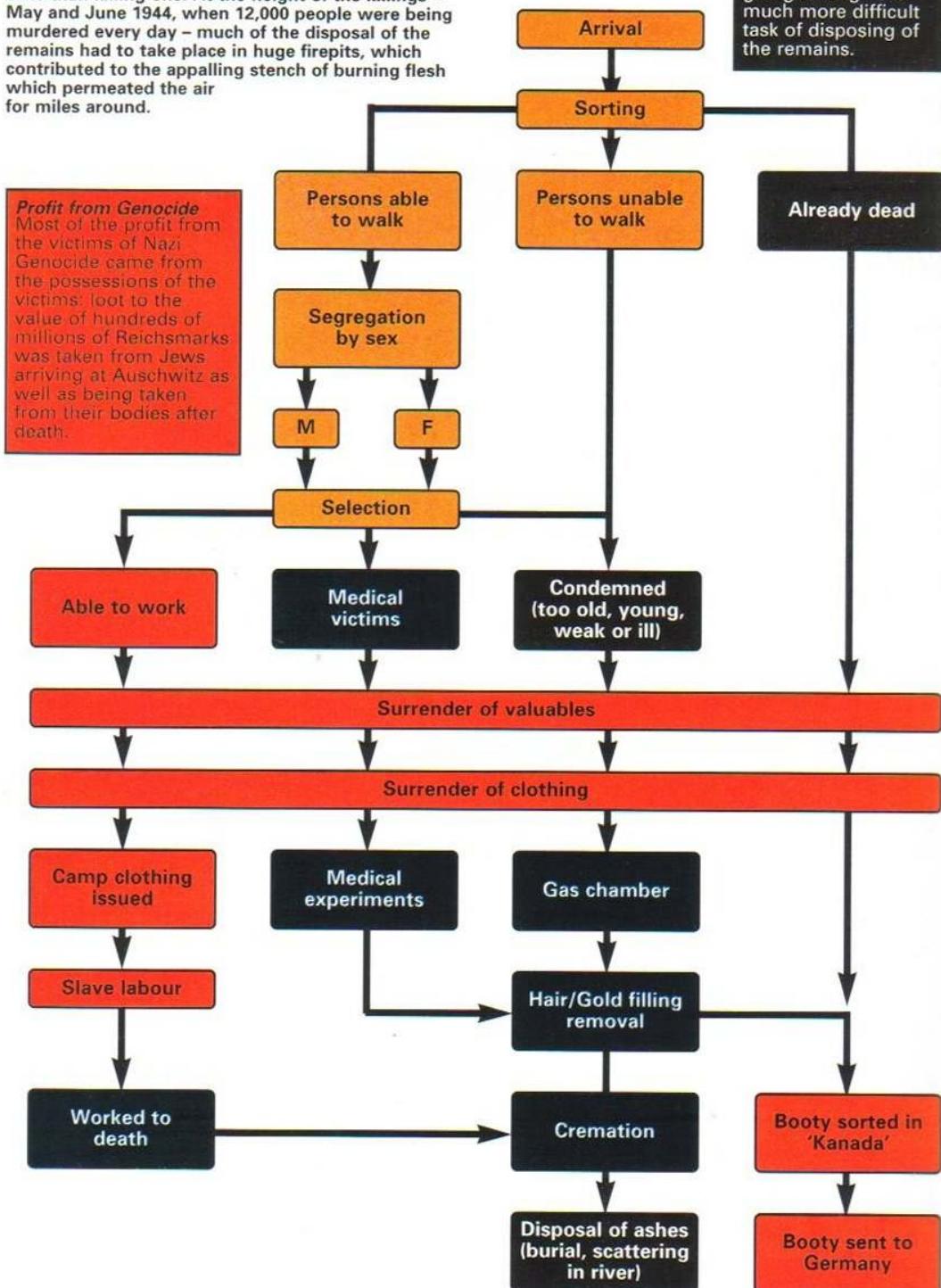
The grisly success of *Aktion T-4* was well known to the senior Nazis at the Wannsee conference in January 1942. At the Berlin meeting hosted by Reinhard Heydrich, it was decided to apply the same method to exterminate the entire Jewish population of Europe.

The extermination camp at Auschwitz was a true factory of death, dedicated to killing human beings and disposing of their bodies in the minimum time possible. Camp commandant Rudolf Höss had discovered that the larger gas chambers made for faster killing: his four could hold up to 2,000 people each, ten times the capacity of earlier models. The bottleneck came in disposing of the remains of the victims: his poisoners could kill 2,000 people in one of the large gas chambers in less than half an hour, but burning a human body to ashes took a lot more time than killing one. At the height of the killings – May and June 1944, when 12,000 people were being murdered every day – much of the disposal of the remains had to take place in huge firepits, which contributed to the appalling stench of burning flesh which permeated the air for miles around.

**Profit from Genocide**  
Most of the profit from the victims of Nazi Genocide came from the possessions of the victims: loot to the value of hundreds of millions of Reichsmarks was taken from Jews arriving at Auschwitz as well as being taken from their bodies after death.

**Selection Process**  
The first stage in the industrialisation of death was in the selection of victims able to work – about one in four of the earlier transports, but later falling to one in ten.

**Death and Disposal**  
Much of the organisation of the camp was devoted to murdering large numbers of people in a very short time, and then going through the much more difficult task of disposing of the remains.



## **Lebensborn was Heinrich Himmler's obsessive plan to populate the Thousand Year Reich with a master race of pure-blooded 'Aryan' men and women.**

**H**immler's romantic dream of a race of blue-eyed, blond heroes was to be achieved by cultivating an elite according to 'laws of selection' based on criteria of physiognomy, mental and physical tests, character and spirit. His 'aristocratic' concept aimed at consciously breeding a racially organised order which would combine charismatic authority with bureaucratic discipline. The SS man would represent a new human type – warrior, administrator, scholar and leader, all in one – whose messianic mission was to repopulate Europe.

From the outset, Himmler introduced the principle of racial selection to the SS. Married SS



officers were expected to set an example to lower ranks and to the German nation by fathering at least four healthy children. Anyone unable to do so should sponsor "racially and hereditarily worthwhile children".

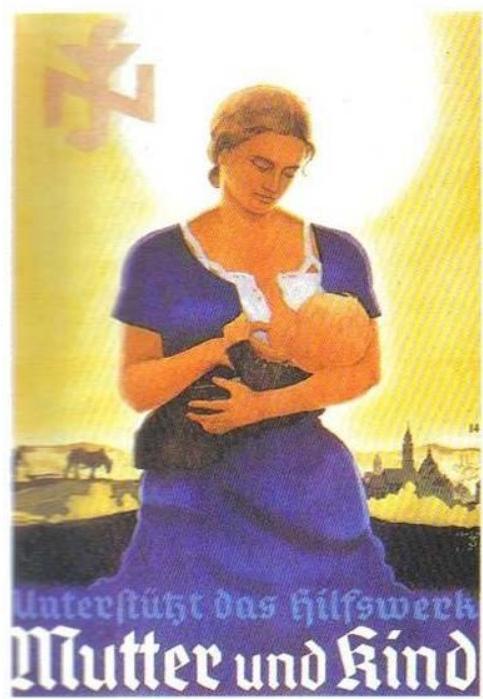
But if SS men were required to do their duty as fathers – in or

out of marriage – there was also a duty on loyal young Nazi women to bear racially pure children. Himmler's notorious procreation order, issued after the outbreak of war, stated that "...it will be the sublime task of German women and girls of good breeding to become

*Above: Central to the planned breeding policy adopted by the Nazis was the erroneous concept that 'germanic' types were superior to all other human beings.*

mothers to children of soldiers setting off to battle", and it was the State-registered human stud farms of the Lebensborn project,

# **LEBENSBorn BREEDING THE MASTER RACE**



**Left:** Motherhood was considered the true duty of all German women, and figured prominently in Nazi propaganda. This poster solicited support for the Mother and Child benefit of the National Socialist Welfare Service, the NSV.

**Below:** The 'Aryan' ideal espoused by the Lebensborn programme was to foster the mating of blonde, blue-eyed athletes, to breed a master race conforming to Himmler's crackpot notions of what the German people should be.

'Order Castles' which were a sort of university for the future elite of the Nazi Party.

The gossip in the Third Reich was that the 13 Lebensborn maternity homes dotted through Germany from Hohehorst near Bremen to Hochland in Bavaria were part SS brothel and part racial stud farm, and that they employed permanent *Zeugungshelfer* or 'procreation helpers' to ensure that only the most Aryan of conceptions took place. Himmler took an active interest, commenting that "...We only recommended genuinely valuable, racially pure men as

*Zeugungshelfer*."

As one participant in the programme recalled, "At the Tegerneseehostel, I waited until the tenth day after the beginning of my period and was medically examined; then I slept with an SS man who had also to perform this duty with another girl. I had the choice of returning home or going direct into a maternity home."

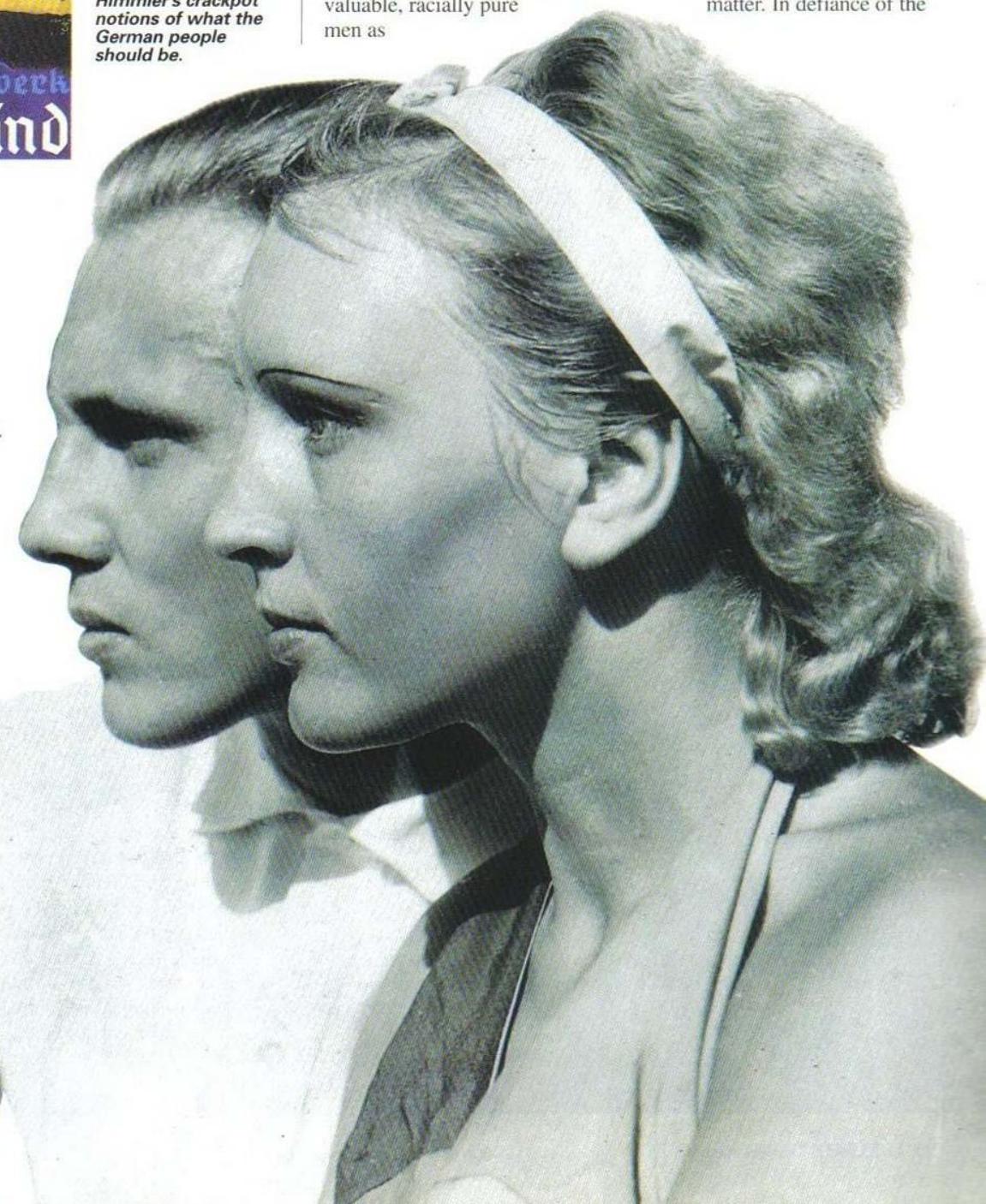
At a late stage in the war Himmler told his physician Felix Kersten: "Only a few years ago illegitimate children were considered a shameful matter. In defiance of the

or Fountain of Life, which was designed to help create the cannon-fodder of the future.

The Lebensborn centres played host to young women selected for their perfect Nordic traits, who displayed regular Aryan features and could prove their descent over several untainted generations.

One girl caught up in a moment of rather startling zeal for the Nazi concept of motherhood was untroubled by the idea of an extra-marital birth. She announced to the surprised passengers on a local Bavarian train in the autumn of 1937:

"I am going to the SS *Ordensburg* Sonthofen to have myself impregnated." Sonthofen was one of four *Ordensburg* or





**"...it is the sublime task of well-bred German women and girls to become mothers to children of soldiers setting off to battle."**

'Frau Maria' or 'Frau Elisabeth'.

For single girls the homes would act as a guardian for the children for up to a year until suitable foster parents had been located. This became increasingly important as the war progressed and many of the fathers were killed in action.

In fact the ratio of wives to

*Left: An infant draped in a swastika-decorated shawl is 'christened' before a portrait of Adolf Hitler. Each child named in such SS ceremonies was given a commemorative silver beaker, a silver spoon and a blue silk shawl.*

# NAZI BREEDERS

## Eugenics, motherhood and the SS



Above: Blonde, blue-eyed images dominated Nazi propaganda, such as this poster appealing for funds to build youth hostels and homes.

unmarried mothers in the Lebensborn homes was 60 to 40; considering the small number of vacancies and a total SS strength of nearly 250,000 potential fathers this does not suggest that there was a boom in pre- or extra-marital sex.

Lebensborn might have seemed another of Himmler's cranky ideas; a little socially disruptive, perhaps, but not actually harmful. However, it also had a darker side.

If a racially acceptable woman in a German-occupied country became pregnant with a German soldier's child she was to be moved to a Lebensborn home so that the child was delivered in Germany and could be integrated into Nazi society. The RuSHA was particularly keen to receive girls from Norway, Finland and Denmark which were seen as having the finest Aryan blood.

But the dream did not stop there. When the Germans invaded Poland, Himmler's SS discovered many blonde, blue-eyed Polish children – the image of the ideal Aryan – and more were found in other occupied countries like Russia and Greece.

Himmler had an estimated 200,000 of these children abducted, often as they walked

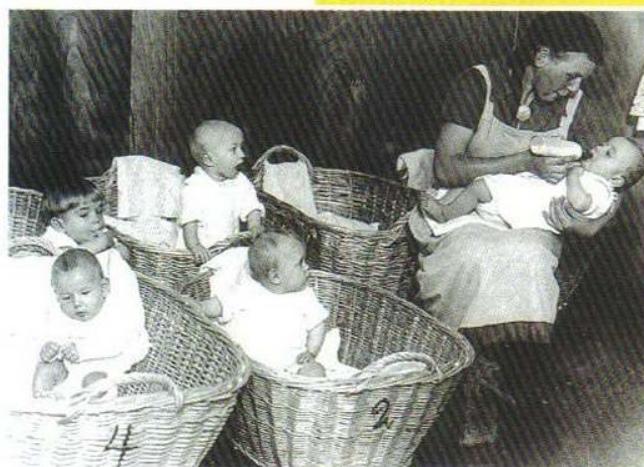
home from school or played. They were transported to special camps and tested to gauge their racial quality. If they passed they were first 'Germanised' and then placed with good Nazi families; those who did not measure up were used as forced labour or sent to camps that specialised in killing children.

The downside of this policy was that tens of thousands of pregnant female slave workers from lower racial groups resident in Germany were forced to have abortions.

Himmler's aim was to "bring home" some 30 million human beings "of our blood", creating a Reich with a population of

120 million Germanic men and women.

Ironically, much of this criminal activity would have been wasted. After the war a few



of the surviving kidnapped children were traced by and reunited with their natural parents. Like many children, as they grew up they changed, and some of the blonde 'Aryan' babies became dark haired, slightly-built or chubby adults – and not the fair haired Nordic giants of Himmler's dreams.

Lebensborn or the 'Fount of Life Association' was registered in September 1936 under the auspices of the *Rasse und Siedlungshauptamt* (RuSHA or SS Central Office for Race and Resettlement).

Writing in 1939 Guenther d'Alquen, editor of the SS newspaper *Das Schwarze Korps* explained:

"The Lebensborn association consists primarily of members of the SS. It provides mothers of large families with the finest obstetrical treatment in excellent maternity homes, also facilities for rest both before and after confinement. It also affords an opportunity for pre- and extra-conjugal mothers of good stock to give birth under relaxed conditions".

The homes, whose motto was "Every mother of good blood is our sacred trust", varied in size – Alpenland had only one nurse, while Heim Taunus had 22. Some were established in the former homes of wealthy German Jews, which had been expropriated by the Gestapo.



Matrons and other staff were selected on political grounds, with many of the nurses coming from the Brown Sisterhood, a Nazi nursing organisation holding diametrically opposed views to their colleagues drawn from religious orders.

In the homes mothers received an allowance of 400 Reichsmarks while the daily fee was only RM2, later rising to RM2.5. This meant that single women could afford to move in during the early months of pregnancy. SS girl friends attended courses in mothercraft, acquiring the certificates of suitability which Himmler insisted must be issued before a marriage certificate.



Above: Babies born at an SS maternity home are wheeled out for a breath of fresh air.

Below: Teenage members of the League of German Maidens were seen as ideal future mothers of SS children.

Above: For every fourth child born to an SS family, the mother was given a silver candlestick engraved with the message 'You are a link in the clan's chain'. Mothers of large families were also eligible for the medal known as the 'Cross of Honour of the German Mother'.



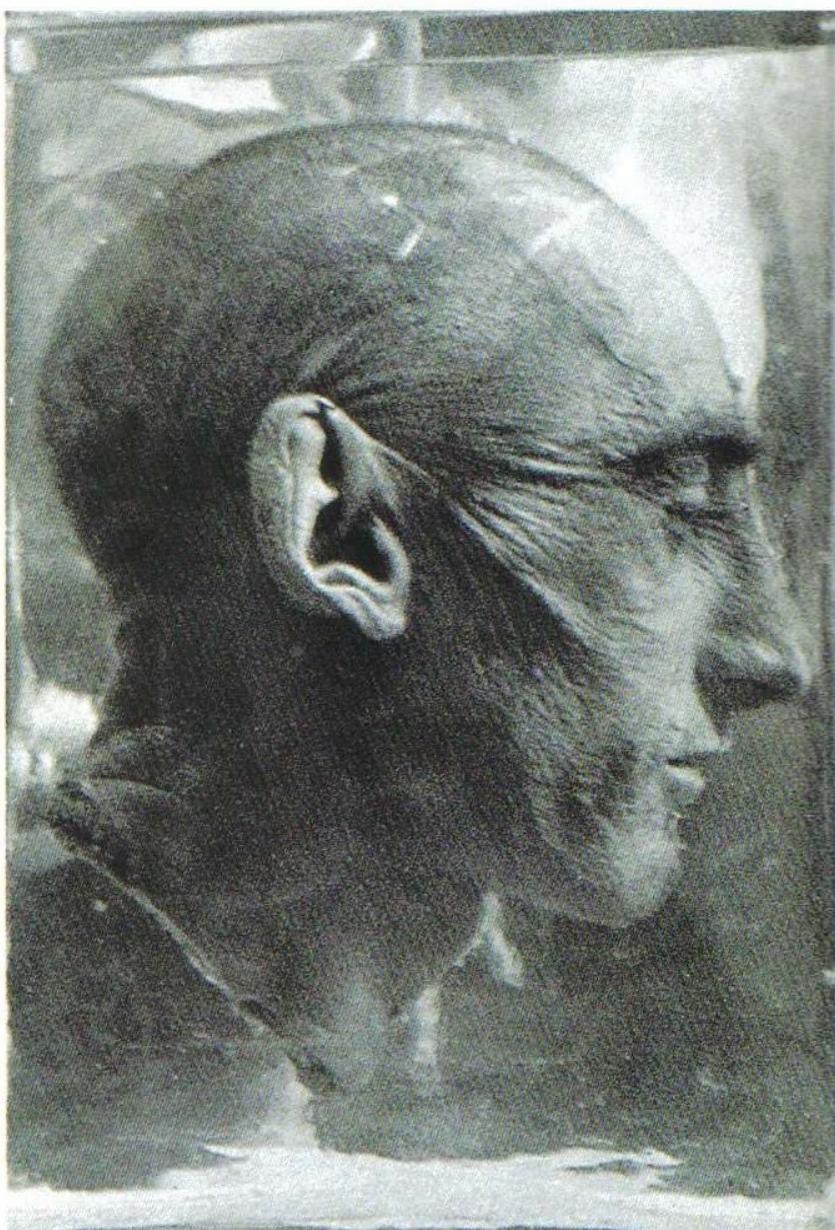


**P**RISONERS in the ever-spreading network of concentration camps were subject to every conceivable and many inconceivable kinds of abuse. Nothing, however, was more horrific and more sinister than the appalling use of victims as experimental animals by Nazi doctors.

Experiments were carried out on German criminals, homosexuals and Russian prisoners of war as well as on Jewish, gypsy and Polish concentration camp prisoners. They were injected with lethal diseases and subjected to poison and chemical warfare experiments. Victims were given open wounds and then deliberately infected with gas gangrene – hundreds of women suffering this way at Ravensbrueck in a series of experiments conducted by two of the most assiduous experimenters, Karl Gebhardt and Fritz Fischer. Prisoners were operated on without anaesthetics, and others were subject to bone-graft experiments.

#### STERILISATION

German doctors carried out anatomical studies before and after death, and worked out ways of sterilising whole populations of 'subhumans'. Doctor Carl Clauberg, who worked in Auschwitz's infamous Block 10, injected hundreds of women with corrosive and caustic substances in order to find out the quickest way of rendering them barren, while Doctor Horst Schumann worked out an even quicker method for males: while they filled out forms, their genitals were given a massive dose of X-rays from a generator hidden beneath the counter. They certainly achieved the effect the experimenters wanted, but the



*Left: This preserved head of a concentration camp prisoner was found at Buchenwald, one of the most active of the Nazi medical experimentation centres.*

doses were so high that in many cases the X-Rays caused serious swelling, burns and genital malformation.

One of the most intensive series of medical experiments was carried out at the Dachau concentration camp. In 1941 Doctor Sigmund Rascher, a Luftwaffe doctor, approached Himmler requesting prisoners for use in high-altitude research. He received the Reichsführer's enthusiastic backing, together with support from the Luftwaffe, who moved their main decompression chamber to Dachau for the experiments.

#### SUFFOCATION

Over a six-month period Rascher subjected some 200 victims to simulated altitudes ranging from 9000 to 15000 metres. Some were given no preparation for the ordeal, while others wore flight suits and were given oxygen. As the pressure dropped nearer to vacuum, according to an inmate who worked in

Rascher's office "they would go mad, pulling out their hair and tearing at their face with their fingers and nails in an attempt to relieve the pressure. They would beat the walls with their heads and scream in an effort to relieve pressure on their eardrums. These experiments generally ended in the death of the subject."

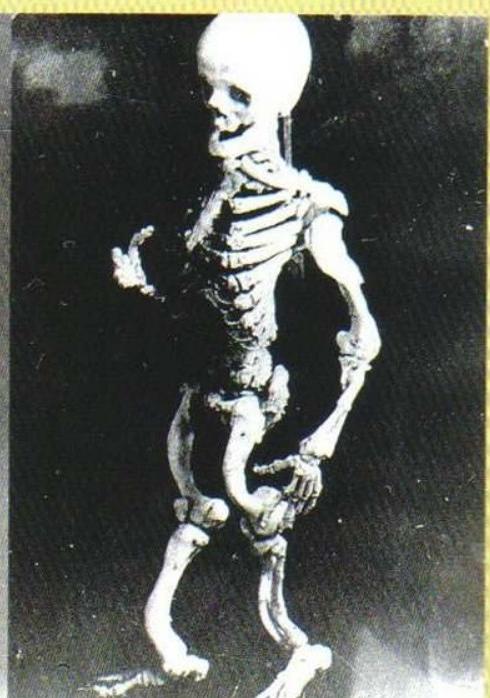
Rascher's experiments finished in May 1942, with commendations from Goering, Himmler, and Lieutenant General Hippke, the Luftwaffe's chief medical officer. However, Hippke went on to say that the Dachau programme had overlooked the effects of extreme cold on

# Medical Monsters

**"We used prisoners for our experiments because they were cheap: indeed, they were cheaper than experimental rats."**

**Witness testimony  
Nuremberg Doctors' trial**

# THE LIFE AND DEATH OF ALEXANDER KALAN



**A**lexander Kalan was a Dutch Jew who had already been dealt a poor hand by life by the time that Germany invaded the Netherlands in 1940. Born in Rotterdam in 1899, he was a dwarf suffering from osteomalacia or skeletal malformation. He was intelligent, however, and was a qualified high school teacher.

In 1941, the Germans began sending Jews from the Netherlands to forced labour camps: first to Buchenwald and then to Mauthausen in Austria. Kalan eventually arrived at Gusen, one of Mauthausen's satellite labour camps. Early in 1943 he was transferred to the main camp at Mauthausen, where he attracted

the attention of the camp doctors, who ran a large programme of medical experiments. Always on the lookout for interesting anatomical specimens, on 27 January they had the unfortunate Jew killed by a single knife thrust to the chest. Stripped of its flesh, his skeleton was then mounted and used for research into bone malformation.

**ABOVE:** The awful fate of Alexander Kalan is captured in a horrifying sequence of photos, taken over a matter of days after his arrival at Mauthausen.

high-altitude survival, and that the Luftwaffe would be experimenting in this field with a specially-built refrigerated decompression chamber.

Rascher was already at work on the problem. From the autumn of 1942, he conducted a series of freezing experiments: first, to see how much cold a human could endure, and second, to find out how best to revive someone with acute hypothermia.

## FROZEN TO DEATH

Prisoners, usually Jews or Gypsies, were dumped naked into baths of icy water or (in winter) left exposed outside in sub-zero temperatures. Rascher and his assistants (many of whom were prisoners themselves, forced to take part in

the experiments) took notes of the subjects' temperature, respiration and heartbeat as they deteriorated and died. Early experiments were on fully conscious individuals, but as they suffered they cried aloud making "such a racket that it was impossible for Rascher to continue without anaesthetising them".

The revival experiments ranged from using warm blankets through inducing electric currents

*Right: Professor Carl Clauberg places a partially anaesthetised prisoner on the operating table in Auschwitz's infamous Block 10. Clauberg was a fertility expert who ran one of the largest Nazi sterilisation investigations.*

through the heart and lungs to using naked women. The quickest way of raising the victim's body temperature was by exciting him through sexual intercourse.

Rascher continued

**"Of course, I am a doctor; to preserve a human life I would remove a gangrenous appendix. Well, the Jew is the gangrenous appendix in the body of mankind."**

**Doctor Fritz Klein  
Concentration camp doctor**





experimenting until the summer of 1944, when he was arrested by the SS. Apparently, he and his wife had offended Himmler by starting a family. It was not the family that the Reichsführer objected to: rather it was the fact that the couple had kidnapped their three children from orphans. Both were sent to concentration camps – Rascher in his own Dachau – and both were executed on Himmler's orders in the last days of the war.

### WIDESPREAD GUILT

Although fewer than 200 doctors were directly involved in the worst of the experiments, the biggest indictment of the German medical profession is that thousands more knew what was happening – and did nothing.

Their numbers included many committed Nazis, such as SS physician Adolf Pokorny. Pokorny wrote to Himmler saying that the enemy must be exterminated – but not until the maximum of work could be



*Above: The first prisoners in the Dachau high-altitude research programme were simply placed in a chamber from which the air was gradually removed: about 80 died, and those who survived would tell no tales since they were usually killed soon afterwards.*

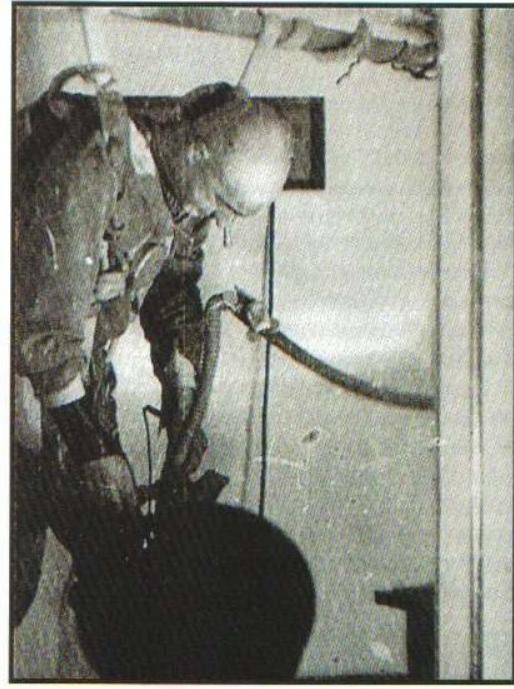
## "The first shipment we received was of the bodies of 30 women – which were still warm when they arrived."

**Henri Heypierre  
Lab assistant to Doctor Augustus Hirt  
Strasbourg Anatomical Institute**

extracted from them, and the best way of doing that was to conduct a programme of mass sterilisation. Others, like the infamous Doctor Mengele, the Auschwitz 'angel of death' seemed to take pleasure in their experimental work, while Doctor Augustus Hirt of the Strasbourg Anatomical Institute did not care where his specimens came from, just as long as they came in large numbers.

In spite of attempts to cover up their actions, a number of doctors survived the war to face judgement. The 'Doctor's Trial' which opened at Nuremberg late

in 1946 saw 23 of the most important people involved in the medical programme charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity. Specific experiments mentioned in the indictment included high-altitude and freezing research, experiments involving malaria, typhus, typhoid, yellow fever, smallpox, cholera, diphtheria, mustard gas, the effects of various poisons, deliberate infection of wounds to test sulfa-nilimide, bone transplants, regeneration of bone and nerves, the effects of drinking seawater, epidemic jaundice, sterilisation, and the



*Left and above: Luftwaffe involvement in the high-altitude research at Dachau meant that later prisoners were experimented on in flight gear, to better simulate conditions met by military pilots. Even though more than 200 prisoners died to gather this data, these experiments formed the foundation of post-war aviation medicine, arousing intense controversy to this day.*

effects of incendiary bombs.

The trial lasted until August 1947. Karl Brandt, Rudolph Brandt, Karl Gebhardt, Joachim Mrugowsky, Viktor Brack, Wolfram Sievers and Waldemar Hoven were sentenced to death and hanged on 2 June 1948. Seven defendants – including Adolf Pokorny – were found not guilty, and the remainder were sentenced to terms ranging from 10 years to life.

### ESCAPING JUSTICE

But not all of the doctors were dealt with in this fashion. Rascher was killed by the SS before the end of the war. Professor Holzloehner, who had also worked on freezing experiments, committed suicide after being captured by the British. Augustus Hirt of Strasbourg disappeared as American forces approached the town. Josef Mengele escaped to South America, where he lived under an assumed identity for another quarter of a century.

# MURDEROUS ANATOMY

## Jews butchered in the name of research at the Anatomical Institute of Strasbourg

**A**ugustus Hirt was one of the most evil of the medical experimenters. He was head of the Anatomical Institute of Strasbourg, his speciality being the measurement of heads. In 1941 he asked Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler to provide the skulls of "Jewish-Bolshevik commissars, who represent the prototype of the repulsive, but characteristic sub-human".

Himmler was delighted to be of assistance, delegating the task to SS Standartenführer Wolfram Sievers, the executive secretary of the Ahnenerbe – the SS 'Ancestral Heritage Society'.

Sievers went to work at Auschwitz in July 1943. According to

the indictment at Sievers' trial after the war: "112 Jews were selected for the purpose of completing a skeleton collection for the Reich University of Strasbourg. Their photographs and measurements were taken."

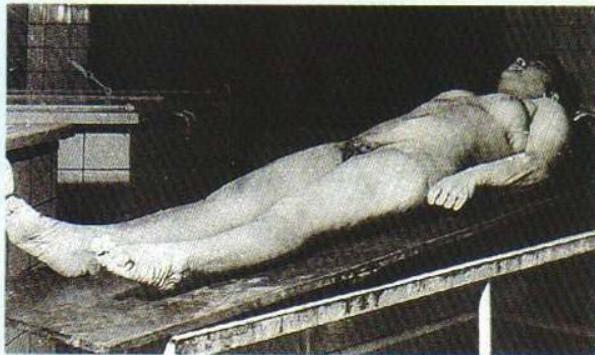
The victims were sent to Natzweiler concentration camp near Strasbourg, where they were gassed under the direction of SS Hauptsturmführer Josef

Kramer, later to become notorious as the 'Beast of Belsen'. The bodies were immediately sent to Strasbourg, where they were pickled in alcohol and

subjected to intensive study.

However, the long process – comparison tests, anatomical research, analysis of pathological features, race studies and the like – meant that in spite of attempts to destroy the evidence when Allied troops took Strasbourg in October 1944, a number of bodies were still there in the vats.

Sievers was found guilty in Nuremberg's 'Doctor Trial', and was hanged in June 1948. Kramer was executed by the British. But Hirt left Strasbourg as the Allies approached, claiming that he would never be taken alive. He has not been seen since.



Above: Doctor Hirt's plan was for the bodies to be preserved, enabling research to be carried out before they were stripped of their flesh and the skeletons added to the University collection.



Above: When the troops of the French 2nd Armoured Division spearheading the American advance took Strasbourg, they found vats full of a gory collection of body parts. The school of anatomy looked more like an abattoir than a respected seat of learning.



Above: In addition to the vats of body parts, a number of fully preserved bodies were found. These were the remains of at least 100 concentration camp victims who had been murdered in the name of research.

Left: Interrogation of the staff revealed that the bodies had been dismembered in preparation for disposal, either by acid or by burning, but the capture of the city interrupted the SS attempt to destroy the evidence of their horrific acts.

In September 1939, Germany unleashed an entirely new kind of attack against Poland. Striking with unprecedented speed and precision, Hitler's armies launched the world's first Blitzkrieg, or Lightning War.

# BLITZKRIEG



ITLER'S invasion of Poland in September 1939 marked the start of World War II in Europe. Many had foreseen the coming conflict, but when it came few could have predicted the astonishing successes of the Wehrmacht.

## APRIL-AUGUST 1939 PLANNING AN INVASION

At the beginning of April, fresh from his almost unopposed annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia, Hitler orders the

German General Staff to commence planning the invasion of Poland. The attack is to be launched on 1st September or soon thereafter. The operation is to be known as *Fall Weiss* ('Case White')

The Army General Staff delivers its plan of action on 7 May. Poland is an ideal theatre for the new kind of 'lightning war' being developed by the Wehrmacht. In addition to being fairly flat (and at the time of the proposed invasion dry and hard-surfaced), her frontiers are much too long to be well defended. She is, moreover, flanked on three sides – East Prussia to the north, Germany to the west and the

newly occupied Czechoslovakia to the south. Poland, in fact, protrudes like a tongue into hostile territory, with the most economically valuable areas of the country closest to the main threat.

The fatal weakness in Poland's defences lies in her lack of armour and mobile forces; the bulk of the army consists of 30 divisions of infantry supported by 11 brigades of horsed cavalry and two motorised brigades. The weakness is compounded by the fact that 17 of the best divisions are forward deployed to protect the valuable mining and industrial areas, rather than behind the much more strongly defensible lines of the Vistula

Above: German troops were more than ready for the invasion of Poland. Well-trained and well-equipped, they were much more effectively led than their opponents, and time and again would outmanoeuvre and outfight the brave but tactically inferior Poles.

and the San rivers.

Providing the spearhead of the German invasion force will be six panzer divisions and eight motorised infantry divisions. These will be supported by 27 foot-slogging infantry divisions with largely horse-drawn logistics. The main role of the infantry will be to engage the attentions of the bulk of the Polish army while the German mobile forces race around the flanks, cutting through supply

# POLAND

lines and striking at command and control centres to the rear.

All through the summer German troops train for action, and in August are moved to their start points. On 31 August, Hitler gives the go-ahead order which will launch *Fall Weiss*.

## 1 SEPTEMBER SURPRISE ATTACK

At 4.45 on the morning of 1 September 1939, without the formality of a declaration of war, Germany's Luftwaffe crosses the Polish frontier. Nearly 1,400 bombers, dive-bombers and fighters begin the systematic destruction of Polish airfields and aircraft, of road and rail centres, of concentrations of troop reserves, and of anything which intelligence or observation has indicated as likely to house command headquarters of any

status. Although not entirely successful – surviving Polish aircraft will be able to put up a stiff resistance over the next week – the surprise attack removes most of the air threat against the advancing Wehrmacht.

One hour after the initial Luftwaffe strikes, Army Group South under General von Rundstedt smashes forward: Eighth Army on the left wing driving for Lodz, Fourteenth Army on the right aimed for Krakow and the line of the River Vistula and the bulk of the armour of Tenth Army under General von Reichenau in the centre piercing the gap between the Polish Lodz and Krakow armies, linking with Eighth Army mobile units and racing on for Warsaw.

Army Group North under von Bock attacks

simultaneously, Third Army under Kuechler driving south from East Prussia and von Kluge's Fourth Army, spearheaded by the panzers of Guderian's XIX Corps striking from the west, across the Polish Corridor.

## 2-3 SEPTEMBER DECLARATIONS OF WAR

While tanks from Tenth Army cross the river Warta, capturing Czestochowa, Britain and France demand the instant withdrawal of all German forces. In the



Above: Stukas were fitted with wind-driven sirens, usually attached to the fixed undercarriage. When activated in the dive, this added a terrifying scream to the already great psychological effect of a near-vertical bombing attack.

# THE POLISH CAMPAIGN

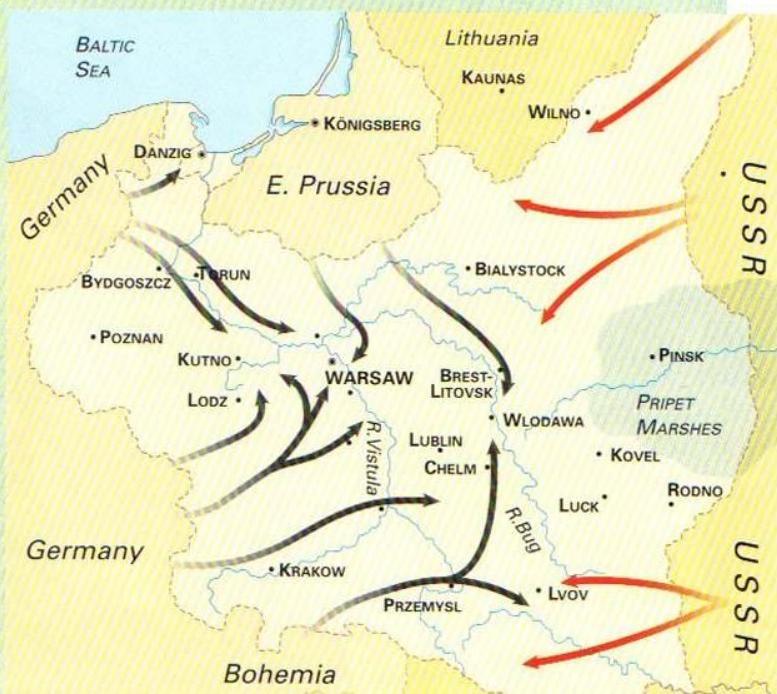
**T**HE INVASION of Poland gave the world its first taste of the power and swiftness of the Blitzkrieg-style of lightning war.

The campaign was envisaged as a massive double pincer movement, three armies being involved in the inner arms of the offensive while two more, spearheaded by strong armoured forces, provided the outer loop of the envelopment. The inner pincer was designed to close on the Vistula river, surrounding the bulk of the Polish field army, while the outer, faster-moving forces were targeted on the Bug, cutting off any possibility of escape.

It was a very effective plan, which achieved most of its objectives by the middle of

September. Any hope the Poles may have had was shattered by the Soviet invasion from the east, launched on 17 September to take advantage of German success.

The inner loop had closed on Warsaw by 10 September, and the Panzers commanded by General Guderian reached Brest-Litovsk only four days later. Even though the Poles fought fiercely, they could manage only one serious counter-attack, on the river Bzura near Warsaw. Although it was enough to force the Germans to reinforce with troops from other parts of the front, the battle was a forlorn hope for the Poles, and after its failure they could offer only sporadic resistance to the Wehrmacht.



**Below:** The Panzer 2 with its 20-mm main gun was never envisaged as a true combat tank, but it made up a large part of the German tank force in Poland.



**Above:** German troops of von Kluge's IV Army destroy the border crossing at Sepolno, west of Bydgoszcz, on the first day of the war.

face of the contemptuous silence with which this is greeted in Berlin, the Allies consult on how best to implement their promises to Poland. That they must be implemented is agreed; but how, when and where are matters for lengthy discussion.

A final ultimatum is sent – and ignored. At 11 am on Sunday, 3 September 1939, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain broadcasts the news that Britain is now at war with Germany. The world will realise, he feels sure, what a bitter personal disappointment this is after Hitler had given his word not to attack.

## 4-6 SEPTEMBER LIGHTNING WAR

By 4 September, Tenth Army spearheads are 80 kilometres into Poland, curving up towards the capital and isolating the Lodz Army from its supplies, while to the south Fourteenth Army panzers have reached the River San on each side of Przemysl.

Meanwhile Army Group North is driving down from Pomerania and East Prussia. Von Kluge's Fourth Army pushes east from Pomerania across the Polish corridor, cutting off Danzig and Gdynia and then following the line of the Vistula

towards Warsaw. Third Army's route out of East Prussia will take it down the line of the Bug towards Brest-Litovsk, Lwow and eventual junction with Fourteenth Army coming up from the Carpathians. Thus two huge encirclements are planned, the outer intended to block any escapees from the inner.

On 5 September, Fourth Army takes Bydgoszcz, breaking through the forward Polish defence line and crossing the northern Vistula; Luftwaffe attacks devastate the town of Sulejow near Warsaw. The next day Southern Army Group's Eighth Army captures Tomaszow, outflanking the bulk of the Polish Pomorze army retreating from the north. The Polish government flees from Warsaw and at the end of the first week only the immediate confusion of battle masks the extraordinary success of the German attack.

## 7-10 SEPTEMBER OBJECTIVE WARSAW

The ancient German pre-dreadnought *Schleswig-Holstein* shells Poland's main naval base at Hela near Gdynia. In spite of some successful counter attacks early in the campaign, the Polish

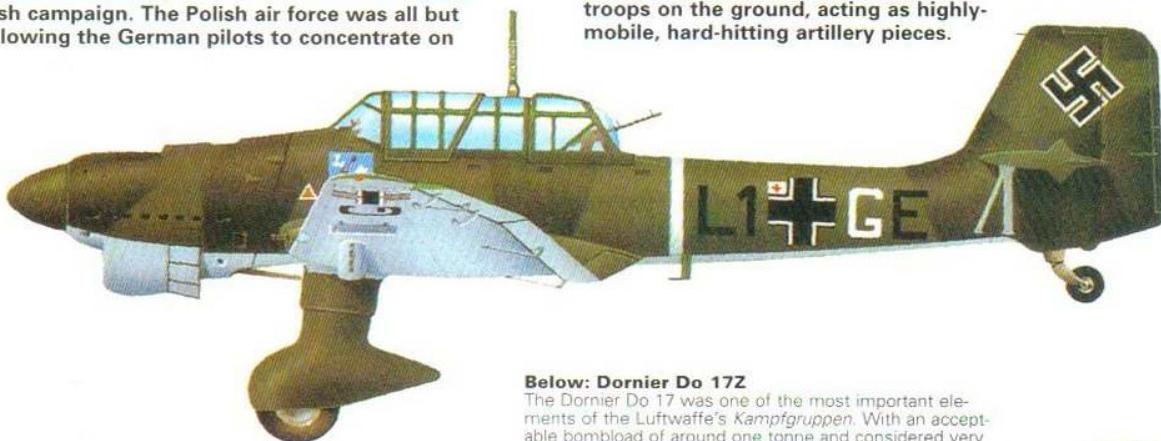


## The Luftwaffe in Poland

Though the Luftwaffe had to keep much of its strength in the west to counter possible action by Britain and France, it was still able to field more than 1600 aircraft for the Polish campaign. The Polish air force was all but wiped out by 3 September, allowing the German pilots to concentrate on supporting the Wehrmacht.

Right: Junkers Ju 87B

300 Stukas drawn from six Stukageschwader provided the spearhead of the Wehrmacht's drive into Poland. This example was flown by the Group Staff Flight of IV Gruppe, Lehrgeschwader 1, commanded by Hauptmann von Brauchitsch.



Unlike most other airforces of the time who were developing long-range bombers, the Luftwaffe had little or no strategic responsibility. Its primary offensive function was to support the troops on the ground, acting as highly mobile, hard-hitting artillery pieces.



Below: Dornier Do 17Z

The Dornier Do 17 was one of the most important elements of the Luftwaffe's Kampfgruppen. With an acceptable bombload of around one tonne and considered very fast for its day, the Do-17 was successful over Poland, but later campaigns were to show that it was too lightly armed and protected when faced with modern fighter opposition.

Right: Messerschmitt Bf 109E

By a wide margin the best fighter of the Polish campaign, the Bf 109 was more than 100-km/h faster than the PZL 11s of the Polish air force, and enabled the Luftwaffe to gain almost complete control of the air. This is a Bf 109E-3 of Jagdgeschwader 51, which entered service just after the final dismemberment of Poland.



air force has been all but wiped out and German Stukas are free to probe ahead of advancing Panzer columns without fear of interruption.

8 September sees the Wehrmacht continuing its drive for Warsaw while Poles entrench on the outskirts of the city. 4th Panzer Division has advanced 225 km since the start of war, an average of more than 30 km per day. To the North, Guderian's corps has continued eastwards and now turns south, spearheading the push towards Brest Litovsk.

The next day 4th Panzer Division reaches Warsaw and attempts to storm the city, but is

**"The Stukas were lethal, especially as there was no real fighter opposition"**

Lieutenant Baron Tassilo von Bogenhardt,  
6th Rifle Regiment,  
German Army

held off. The Germans have surrounded the bulk of the Polish army, but the Poznan army makes a spirited counter attack down the line of the Bzura river, marking the start of the biggest battle of the campaign.

The inner pincers have certainly met successfully, but the chaos inside the trap is such that no one can be sure what is happening. Polish columns march and counter-march in frantic efforts to make contact either with the enemy or with their own support, and in doing so raise such clouds of dust that aerial observation can report nothing but general movement by unidentified forces of

unknown strength, engaged in unrecognisable activity in pursuit of incomprehensible aims.

On 10 September multiple Luftwaffe air raids target Warsaw; the Polish government orders a general military withdrawal to the south east.

### 11–12 SEPTEMBER POLISH ARMY CRUMBLES

Units of the German 14th Army reach and cross the river San on the 11th, and begin driving north towards Brest Litovsk. Meanwhile, the battle for the Bzura pocket heats up. The general fog of war means that there is some doubt at German



headquarters whether or not the bulk of the Polish forces have been trapped, and on the 12th tanks from the Tenth Army are wheeled north to form another block along the Bzura, west of Warsaw.

The battle is the most bitter of the campaign, but the imbalance of forces means that it can only end in defeat for the Poles. Despite their desperate gallantry, they are fighting in reverse against a strong, tactically superior enemy. After the first day the Poles are harried from behind by troops of the German Eighth Army from the south and of the Fourth Army from the north.

Only a very small number of Poles manage to break through the German armoured screen to join the garrison at Warsaw –

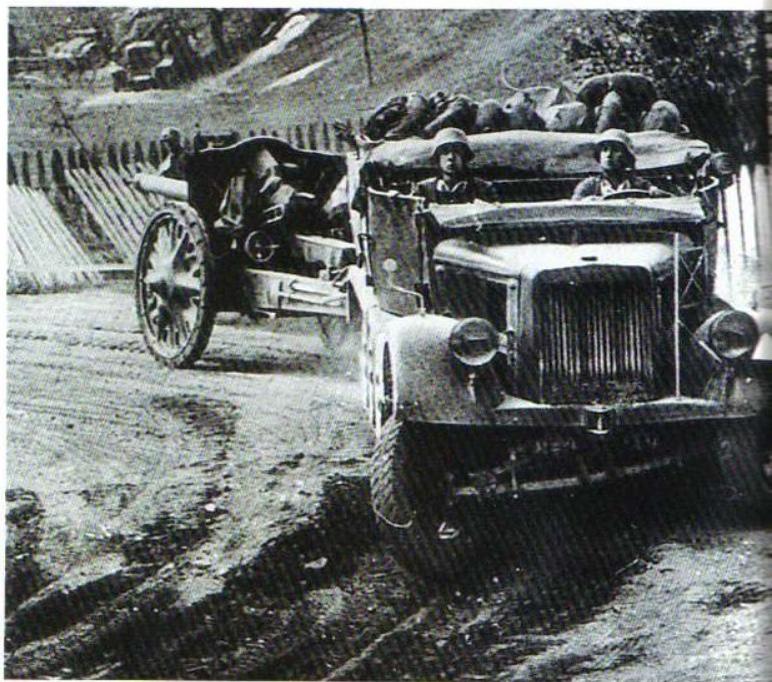
where they will very soon find themselves again cut off from escape by the outer encirclement.

On 13 September Southern Army Group infantry crosses the Vistula south of Warsaw, driving eastwards. The Luftwaffe launches heavy attacks on Warsaw itself. Increased irregular activity lead the German high command to threaten annihilation to towns supporting guerrillas.

A day later Gdynia, Poland's only port, is captured. To the east German mechanised forces reach and take Brest Litovsk, leaving only the citadel in Polish hands.

## 15–21 SEPTEMBER RUSSIAN INVASION

Warsaw is surrounded and besieged. Southern Army group troops occupy the Galician oil fields on the Rumanian border.



*Above: German divisions generally had two artillery regiments, one equipped with 12 heavy 150-mm howitzers and one with 24 or 36 light 105-mm guns. In infantry units the guns were horse drawn, while Panzer divisions used motorised transport. These 105-mm guns are being towed into action in Poland by a 3-tonne SdKfz 11 half-track.*



# Finding the weak spot

## How Lightning War destroys the enemy's will to fight

On 16 September Polish air force bombers make their last effective attacks on the invaders before the few survivors flee to Rumania. Meanwhile, the Germans issue an ultimatum to Warsaw – surrender or be destroyed. The garrison, supported by as many as 100,000 civilians, fights on.

Army Groups North and South meet at Włodawa on 17 September, completing the outer ring of the German double pincer. From this double encirclement only a small fraction of the Polish army can hope to escape, and on the same day even this hope is dashed. The contents of the secret clauses of the Russo-German Pact signed the previous month are cruelly revealed when the Soviet Union sends the Red Army in from the east to collect its share of the spoils.

While the Germans crush any

*Below: Polish cavalry fought gallantly, but all too often found themselves pitted against a mechanised enemy whose armour shrugged aside the attack of lances.*

THE KEY to the success of Blitzkrieg was concentration of force to make an initial breakthrough, followed by extremely rapid, well-directed exploitation before the enemy could react.

Once a weak point in the enemy defences had been identified, the Panzers massed and then advanced under a rain of supporting fire supplied by artillery and dive bombers. The Panzers were also supported by mechanised infantry which could be used to isolate enemy strongpoints bypassed in the headlong advance, and to counter any moves against the German lines of communication.

After the armour was clear of the immediate breakthrough point, the short-barrelled 75-mm guns of the new Panzer IV medium tanks could provide some fire support, but it was the innovative use of dive bombers to crush any opposing strongpoints which was most characteristic of Blitzkrieg.

The speed of the attack was designed to cut enemy lines of communication, spreading confusion through his rear echelons. With the enemy unable to respond or to make meaningful countermoves, the Panzers were then free to advance over hitherto impossible distances and towards distant objectives in days rather than the months of previous campaigns. As they moved the tanks retained the support of the mechanised



infantry, and the early absence of mobile artillery was overcome by the continued use of dive-bombers and other airborne support.

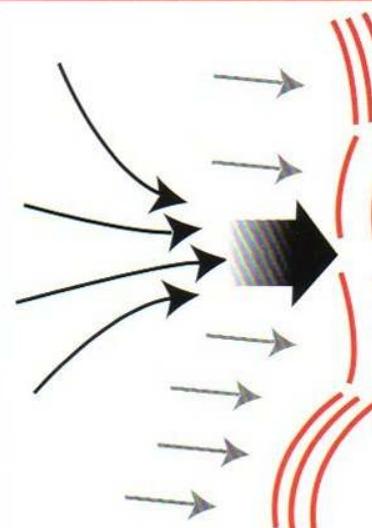
As the deep advances into the enemy rear continued, marching infantry following behind assumed the roles of guarding the flanks and preventing counterthrusts on the lines of communication.

The theory of Blitzkrieg may have been simple, but in practice it required an immense amount of skill. It called for good communications and a very high level of cooperation,

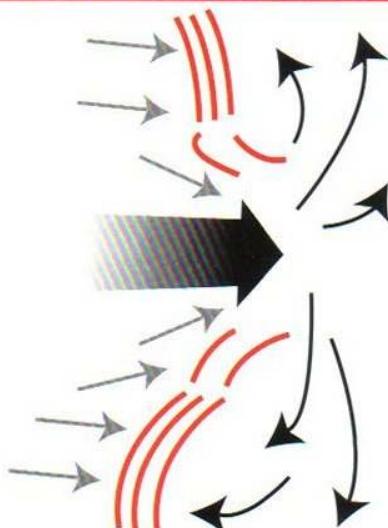
not only between the constituent arms but also between the army and the Luftwaffe.

By 1939 the Germans had been able to train and practice such tactics to the point where they were almost routine, with dress rehearsals in the bloodless annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938, followed by the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia early in 1939. These operations revealed many shortcomings in German organisation and equipment, but these had mostly been ironed out by the time Blitzkrieg became a reality in September 1939.

### STAGE 1 CONCENTRATION OF FORCE



### STAGE 2 PENETRATION OF DEFENCE



*Above: The Wehrmacht formed a powerful offensive spearhead where the enemy was weakest. Known as the *schwerpunkt*, this critical point was chosen using all possible information about enemy deployments.*

*Above: Once through the front line the armoured formations thrust deep into enemy territory and then fanned out. The mobility and firepower of the tanks enabled them to range far and wide in the enemy's rear areas.*





remaining resistance in Brest-Litovsk, the Red Army advances on two fronts north and south of the impassable Pripet marshes, meeting negligible opposition. The Polish government, which has already changed its location five times, flees from the town of Kuty into Rumania.

On 19 September the Polish army in the Bzura pocket is finally defeated: more than 100,000 men are taken prisoner. Further south the Germans surround Lvov.

## 21–28 SEPTEMBER THE FALL OF WARSAW

On 21 September the Germans launch a massive artillery bombardment of Warsaw. The next day, the Soviets occupy Lvov, and with the Germans mount a joint victory parade in Brest-Litovsk.

A further ultimatum is issued on 25 September to the citizens and defenders of Warsaw, emphasised by attacks by more

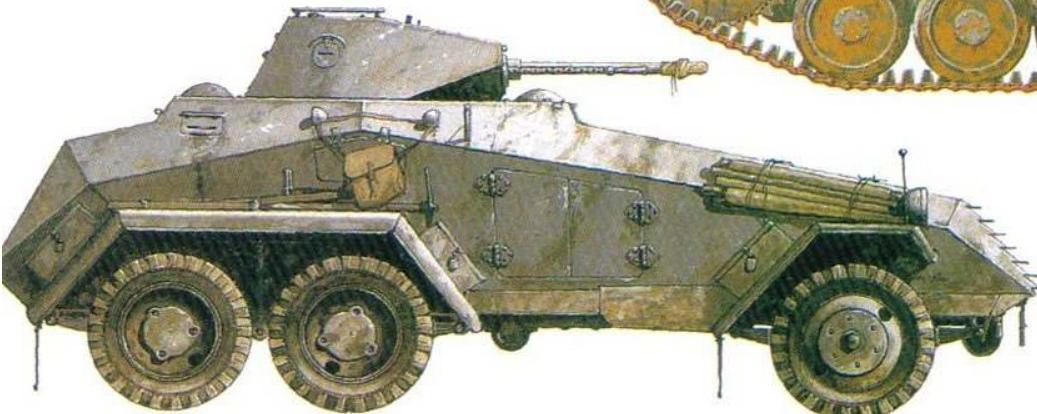


## Weapons of the Blitzkrieg

Although the word 'Blitzkrieg' conjures up images of hordes of massive tanks, smashing through an enemy's strongest defences, the truth was very different. For a start, the first stunning victories were achieved with light tanks of limited fighting power – in many respects, German armour and artillery was less capable than those of their opponents. It was the way that the vehicles were used which was to prove decisive.

### Right: PzKpfw II light tank

Designed as a training machine to prepare German armoured troops for the larger Panzer III and IV tanks then entering service, the Panzer II with its light 20-mm cannon nevertheless provided the bulk of the Wehrmacht's tank strength in 1939 and 1940, with more than 1,000 in use in Poland.



### Left: SdKfz 231 armoured car

The first German armoured vehicles built after World War I were armoured cars, based on truck chassis and developed abroad to avoid the constraints of the Treaty of Versailles. The SdKfz (Sonderkraftfahrzeug, or special purpose vehicle) 231 was classed as a schwere Panzerspähwagen, or heavy armoured reconnaissance vehicle. It was used extensively in Poland and later in the invasion of France, even though its commercial chassis meant that it was not really suitable for prolonged cross-country use.

than 400 bombers. Polish resistance starts to weaken, and on 26 September the Wehrmacht launches an infantry assault on the city after another heavy artillery bombardment.

Within a day the Germans are in control of the outer parts of the city, and the Polish commander, recognising a lost cause, offers to surrender. A ceasefire comes into effect the next day, 28 September.

### 29 SEPTEMBER – 6 OCTOBER **POLAND DISMEMBERED**

The Soviet-German partition of Poland comes into force with the signing of a 'treaty of frontier regulation and friendship' on the 29th.

Poland as a nation ceases to exist, and a new international frontier runs from East Prussia past Bialystok, Brest-Litovsk and Lwow as far as the Carpathians.

Already, SS and SD parties are moving in behind the victorious troops, tasked with

rounding up and segregating Jews, the intelligencia, political and military leaders.

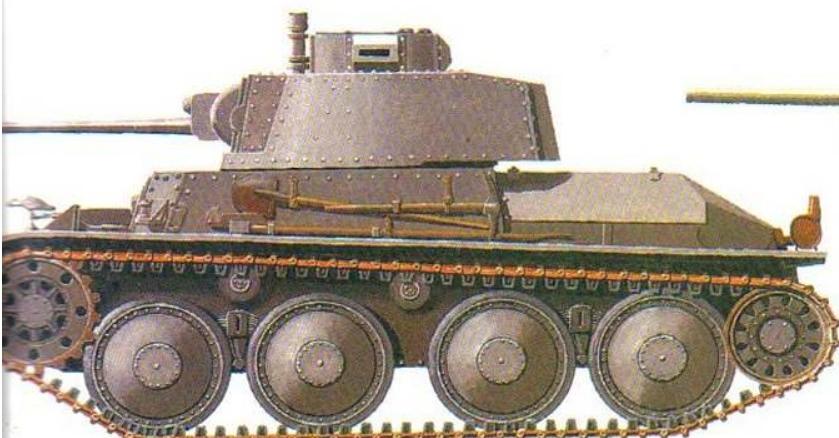
German troops occupy Warsaw on 1 October and begin disarming defenders. Mopping up operations against the remainder of Polish troops still under arms to the east of Warsaw continues until 3 October.

To seal his triumph, Hitler flies into Warsaw on 5 October and takes the salute at a victory parade. Organised Polish resistance ceases the next day with the surrender of 8,000 troops southeast of Warsaw.

Hitler is now free to think about further campaigns in the west. For the moment, Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union are on the same side. But historically, common frontiers between the two countries have rarely provided anything but friction and animosity, and many wonder how long such essentially antagonistic neighbours can exist side by side.

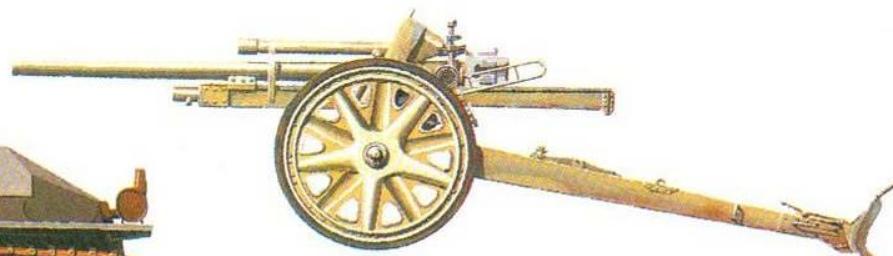


Above: A Russian officer fraternises with a German tank commander after the two invading armies meet at Brest-Litovsk. The friendship over the dismembered remains of Poland is more apparent than real: within 20 months the two dictatorships will begin to fight the bloodiest war in history.



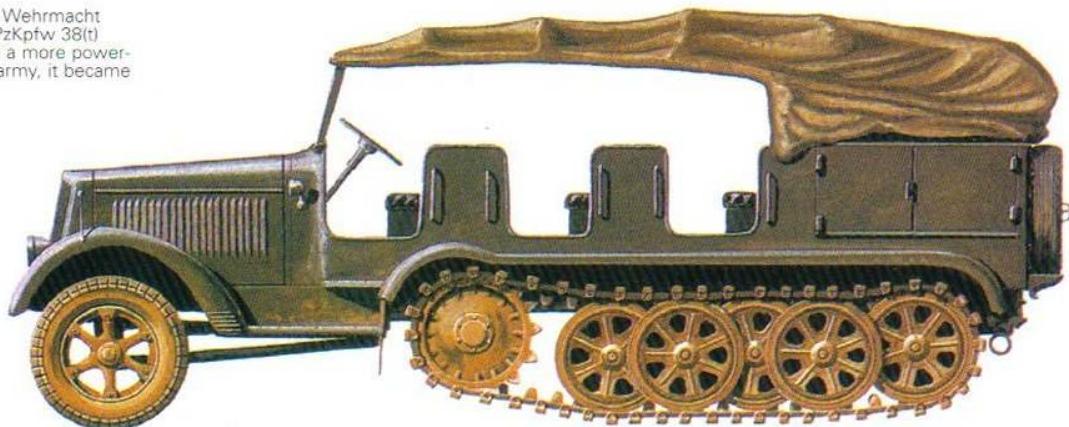
Above: PzKpfw 38(t) light tank

The German annexation of Czechoslovakia gave the Wehrmacht access to the noted Skoda armaments works. The PzKpfw 38(t) was roughly equivalent to the Panzer II, though with a more powerful 37.2-mm gun. Originally designed for the Czech army, it became an important Wehrmacht tank in 1939 and 1940.



Above: 10.5-cm leFH 18

German artillery did not match the excellence of some other Wehrmacht weapons. This Rheinmetall-designed howitzer was solid and reliable, able to fire a 14-kg shell out to 12,000 metres, but at two tonnes it was too heavy for the kind of mobile warfare in which it was used.



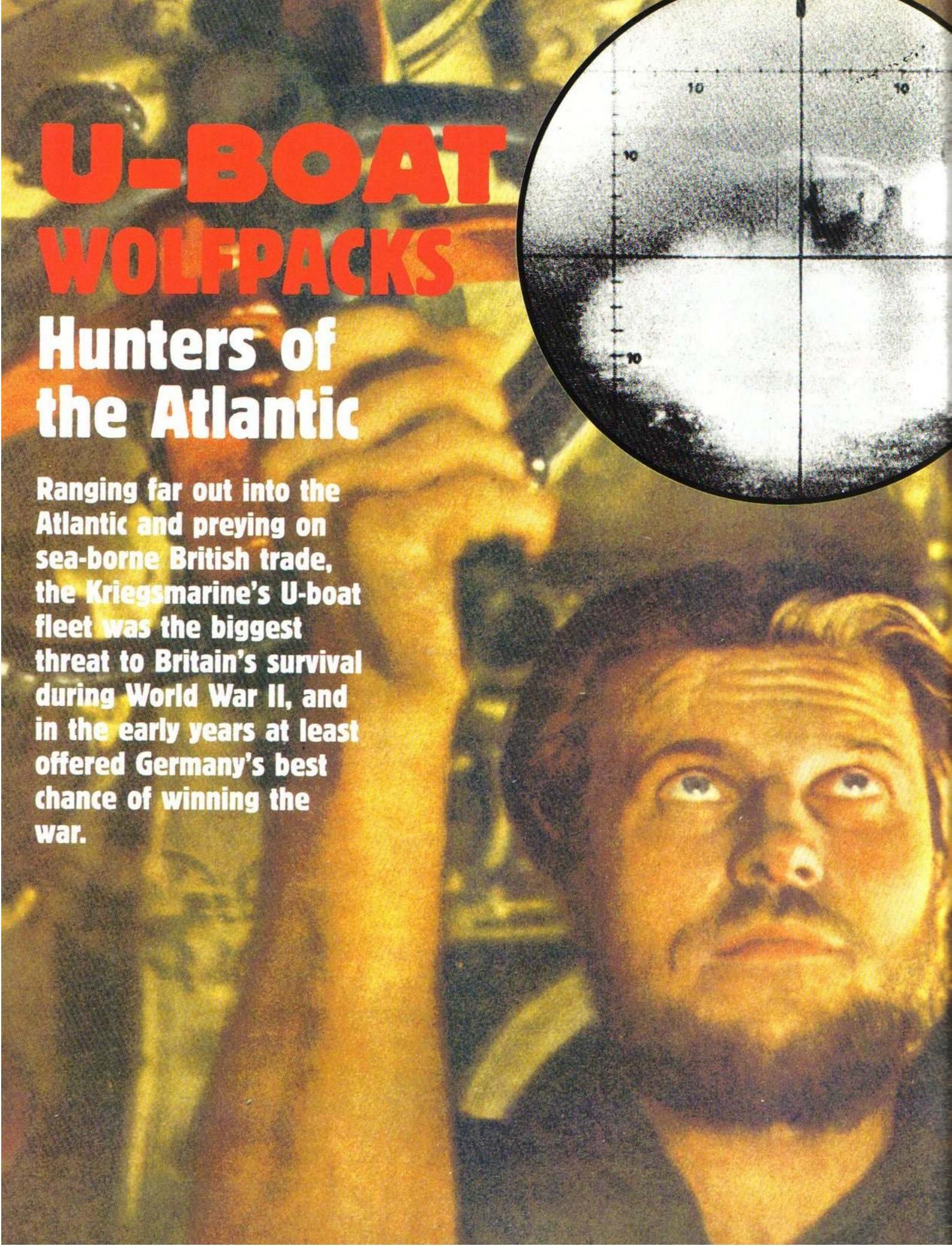
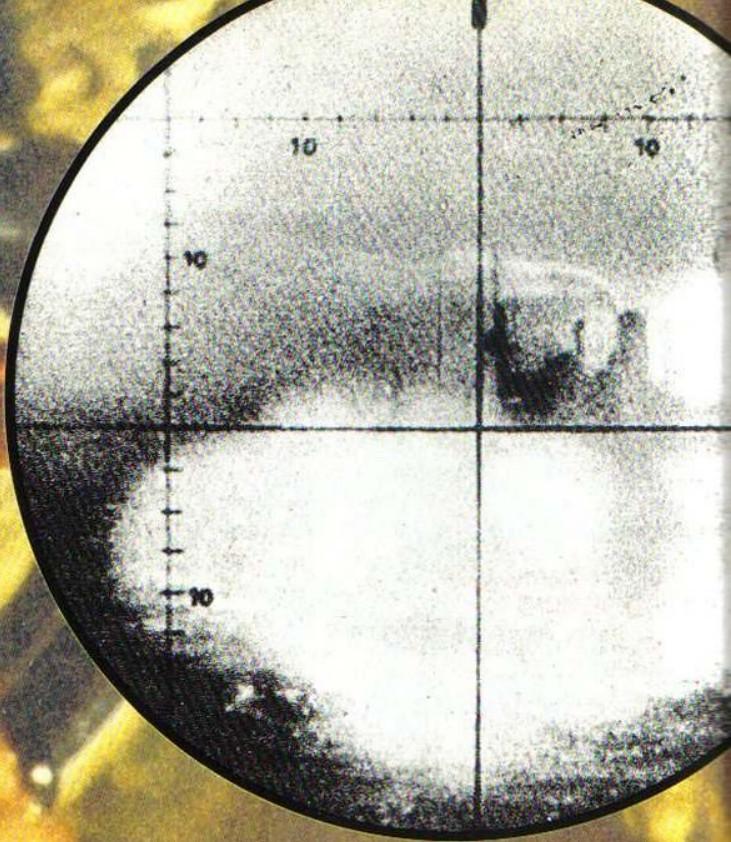
Right: SdKfz 7 medium half-track

Standard prime mover of the Wehrmacht in the early years of the war, the SdKfz 7 was used mainly as an artillery tractor. It could carry 12 men and their equipment along with ammunition and supplies, at the same time as it towed loads of up to eight tonnes. More than 6,100 were produced in the ten years from 1934.

# U-BOAT WOLFPACKS

## Hunters of the Atlantic

Ranging far out into the Atlantic and preying on sea-borne British trade, the Kriegsmarine's U-boat fleet was the biggest threat to Britain's survival during World War II, and in the early years at least offered Germany's best chance of winning the war.





In 1939, half the food eaten in the United Kingdom came from overseas. Two-thirds of the raw materials required by Britain's war industries were imported too. If German U-boats could stop this flow of goods by sinking Allied merchant ships, Hitler would win the war.

After the French surrender in 1940, the bulk of the U-boats were based on France's Atlantic coast in vast reinforced-concrete submarine pens. To reach the shipping lanes they had to cross the Bay of Biscay. Travelling on the surface to get into action as quickly as possible, they often submerged by day to hide from British long-range aircraft.

## WAR PATROL

Once in the Atlantic, the hunt began. From his headquarters ashore, Doenitz exercised tight

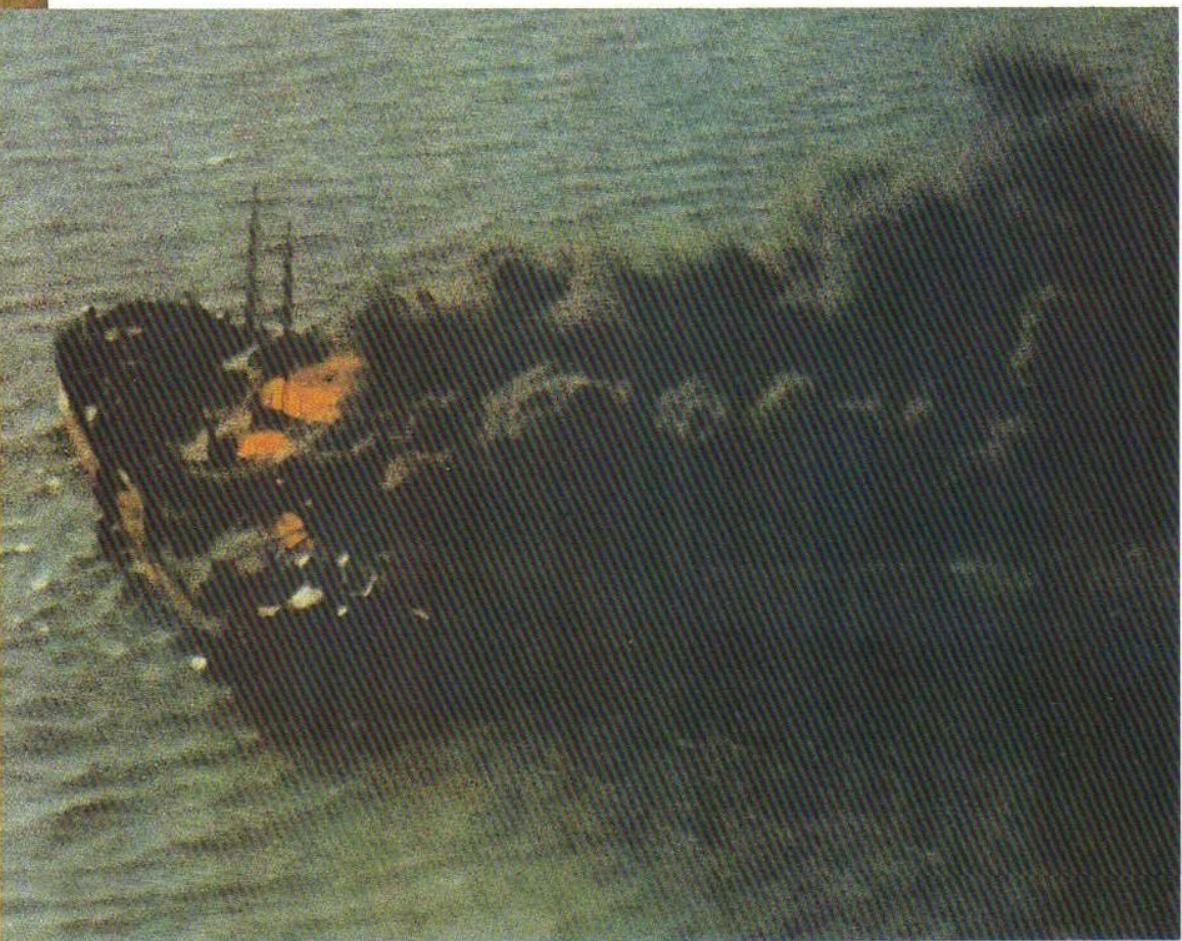
control over his U-boats. By radio direction finding, aerial reconnaissance and the cracking of certain British naval codes, Doenitz enjoyed some success at predicting the course of the convoys. U-boat 'Wolf packs' were assembled, patrolling in long lines with the submarines at intervals of 10 to 20 km.

Once a convoy was located, Doenitz assigned one U-boat as 'shadower'. This followed the convoy, reporting its course and speed to the U-boat HQ while the other boats moved in for the kill. The first attacks were made underwater, but ace skippers quickly learned that night surface attacks were more effective, trusting to their low silhouette to avoid detection and to the U-Boat's ability to outpace most escorts. More cautious skippers remained submerged and fired fans of torpedoes at the columns of merchant ships. The top commanders each sank over a

hundred thousand tonnes of Allied shipping.

Standard defence against a U-boat attack was to fire starshell; the sudden burst of light occasionally revealed a U-boat on the surface. Any nearby escorts would open fire with their main armament: really aggressive escort commanders would try to ram their opponent. Curiously, if a U-boat submerged it became easier to detect. These were the days before effective radar had been widely deployed aboard escorts, but they all had ASDIC detection gear, which used sound waves to search for submerged boats. If a U-boat was detected a deadly game of cat and mouse would follow in which the submarine, with its low underwater speed and limited submerged range, was at a distinct disadvantage. The crew listened as the 'ping' of enemy sonar echoed around them. If full speed on the electric motors and

The Battle of the Atlantic was an epic struggle, during which the German U-boat arm sank 150 Allied warships and 2,850 merchantmen of more than 14 million tonnes. But it was at considerable cost: although over 1,100 U-boats were built only 630 managed to get into operation, and 817 of those were sunk.





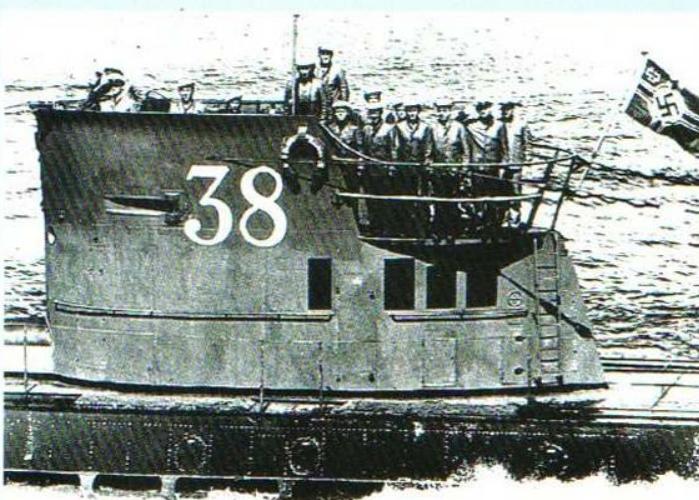
## BENEATH THE WAVES

### Inhuman conditions of U-boat life

**L**ife aboard a U-Boat was hard. The boat was packed with weapons, engines, batteries, equipment and supplies, and there was little room for the crew, who could be at sea for up to 60 days.

The bow compartment was 'home' to 24 men, who had to share it with the torpedoes. At least half were on duty at any one time, and they took turns to sleep in collapsible bunks or hammocks. There was no privacy, nor were there any real washing facilities, so the atmosphere reeked of body odours, motor oil and stale food.

The captain, his three officers and five senior petty officers shared the next compartment aft. The captain's bunk was on the port side: the other side of the central passageway were the radio and sonar rooms. The officers' com-



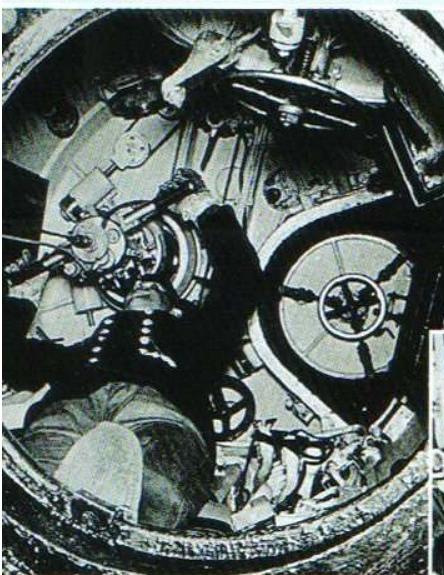
partment also housed the toilet, shared by the whole crew. There was another aft, near the galley, but this was invariably used to store provisions.

Aft of the control room was a compartment with eight bunks for the petty officers, lockers for the crew's personal possessions and the boat's galley: a three-ring electric hob, two little ovens and a tiny sink.

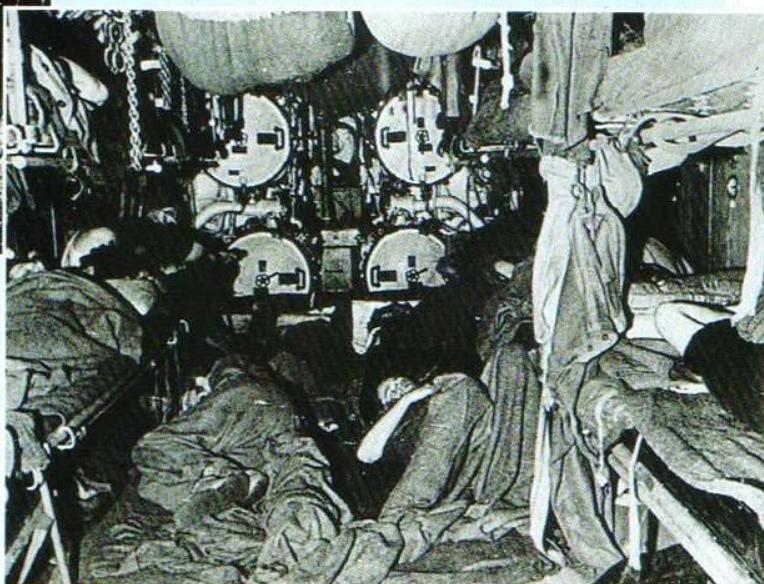
Food was stored everywhere when the boat put to sea: in the early days of a patrol it was a floating larder, with sausages and mesh bags of bread dangling from the ceiling, cheeses and canned food crammed into every bit of space.

*Above: A Type IX U-Boat returns to port after a two-month war patrol far out in the Atlantic.*

*Below: U-boat crewmen lived in conditions of almost unspeakable squalor – cramped, crowded, damp, unhygienic and usually too hot or too cold for comfort.*



*Above: The working spaces of a World War II-era submarine were crammed from deck to ceiling with a daunting mass of pipes, dials, valves, hand wheels, levers and other equipment. The men who worked in these quarters had to be able to withstand claustrophobia as well as weeks or even months of very close and increasingly insanitary proximity to his crewmates.*



rapid alterations in course failed to shake the pursuer, they could try to escape by stealth, but all too often the U-boat men would hear the awful express train sound of a destroyer passing overhead to drop depth charges. The thunderous detonations of the explosive devices reverberated through the submarine. A near miss could smash dials, crack open valves and plunge the boat into darkness.

### EVADING DEPTH CHARGES

Bold skippers would take the boat down through the pre-war safety depth of 50 metres, the hull creaking as the pressure increased, down to and even beyond the normal maximum permissible depth of 150 metres.

To escape from a particularly accurate depth-charging attack in 1939, the famous 'ace' Otto von Kretschmer dived U-99 beyond 210 metres, his gamble paying off because early-war British depth charges had a maximum depth setting of 150 metres. If the U-boat men were lucky, the escorts would lose contact or be compelled to abandon the attack and rush to head off an attack on another part of the convoy and the submarine could slink away.

The effect of such an attack was often to leave the U-boat a long way astern of the convoy. As long as the boat was not too seriously damaged, it would creep up to periscope depth after an hour or two. Catching the convoy again would be impossible while submerged, so captains would bring their boats back to the surface as soon as possible, using the U-boat's superior surface speed to regain contact, ready to renew its attack the following night.

Once out of torpedoes a U-boat commander would often be instructed to continue to shadow the convoy, sending position reports for the benefits of

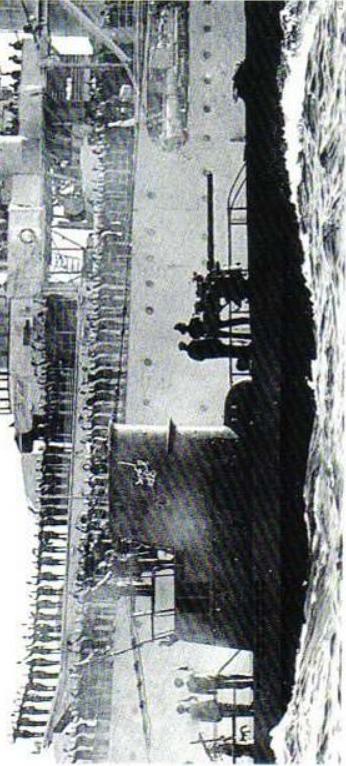
# Type VIIC Unterseeboot



The majority of U-boats that fought the Battle of the Atlantic were Type VIIIs. Originally a pre-war ocean-going design, only 10 of the original Type VIIAs were built before production switched to the Type VIIBs, which was stretched by about 2 metres to allow more fuel and torpedoes to be stowed, and which had more powerful diesels for greater surface speeds. This and the Type VIIIC, again enlarged to carry two extra torpedoes, were built in huge numbers. Over 700 Type VIIIs were built, construction continuing from 1936 right through the war.

The Type VII had no air conditioning or proper heating. On patrols to the Caribbean the temperature inside often reached 35 degrees C – by contrast, boats wreaking havoc on American shipping off the US east coast in January 1942 recorded internal temperatures of 1 degree C day after day.

A Type VII U-boat of the Seventh Flotilla returns to port after a successful cruise. The Flotilla's 'Laughing Bull' insignia adorned the conning towers of some of the most successful U-boat aces.



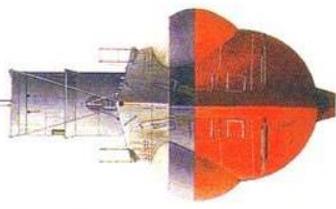
## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

### Type VIIIC U-boat

Crew:	44 officers and men
Displacement:	769 tonnes surfaced/ 871 tonnes submerged
Length:	66.5 m (218 ft)
Beam:	6.2 m (20 ft)
Draught:	4.7 m (15.5 ft)
Machinery:	2-shaft diesel/electric delivering 2,800 hp on diesel engines and 750 hp on batteries

Speed:	17 knots surfaced/ 7.5 knots submerged
Range:	15750 km (9,785 miles) at 10 knots on surface/ unrecharged underwater range 130 km (80 miles) at 4 knots or less
Armament:	1 x 88 mm gun, 1 x 20-mm AA gun (later fitted with one or two flakvierling quad AA mounts); 14 x 533 mm (21 in) torpedoes fired through four forward torpedo tubes and one aft tube

key to the U-boat's success, especially when attacking on the surface, was its size. In normal trim most of the boat was underwater, and at night or in any sort of heavy weather the small bridge structure would have been very difficult for look-outs on a convoy escort to spot.



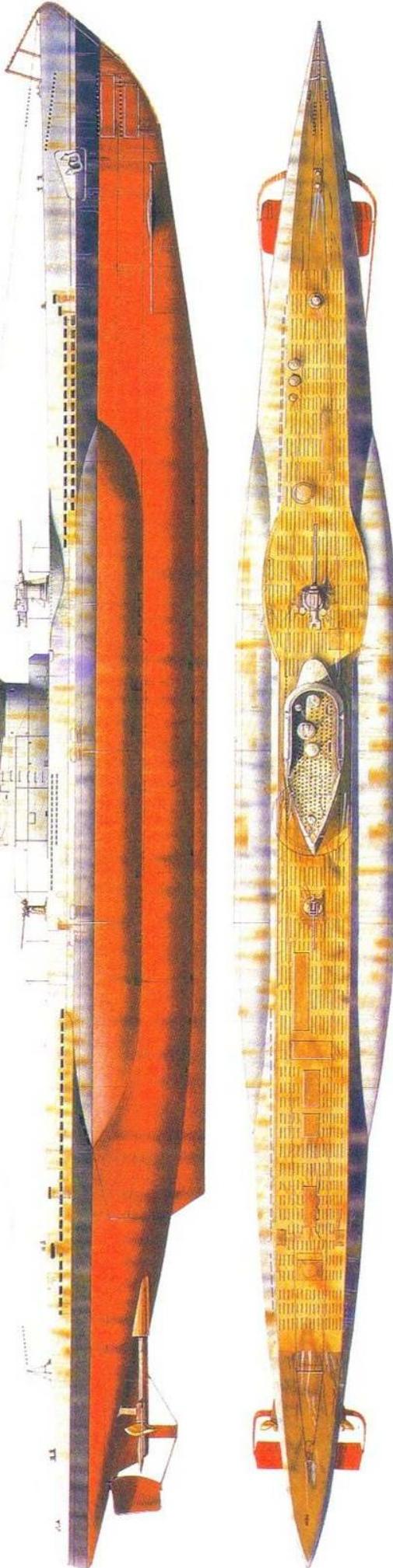
Type VIIIs had four torpedo tubes in the bow, for which six reloads were carried in the bow compartment (two on the deck plates and four below in the bilges) plus a single torpedo tube in the stern, with one reload.

The six-metre-long control room was aft of the officers' compartment. In the middle was a cylindrical tube with a ladder inside, leading up into the cramped conning tower which housed a duplicate helm station, engine telegraph and the attack periscope.

The conning tower opened out to the bridge, where four lookouts were posted when the boat was on the surface. Each man was responsible for one 90-degree segment of the horizon, peering through Zeiss 7 x 50 binoculars. The safety of the boat depended on their vigilance; there was no radar aboard.

Type VIIIs were driven by twin propellers. Under diesel power the boat could reach around 17.5 knots – more than enough to run rings around a slow-moving convoy.

The engine room, a narrow passageway running between two diesel engines, and beyond that, the electric motor compartment. An air pipe ran from the engines up to the top of the bridge structure, keeping the engines' air intake as far above sea level as possible. The diesels propelled the boat on the surface and charged the electric batteries that powered it underwater.





*Above: The bridge of a U-Boat out in the Atlantic was both a refuge and a place of acute danger. Going topside was the only way for a crewman to escape the stinking interior of the boat and get any fresh air, but in rough weather it was often inundated by a green wall of water.*

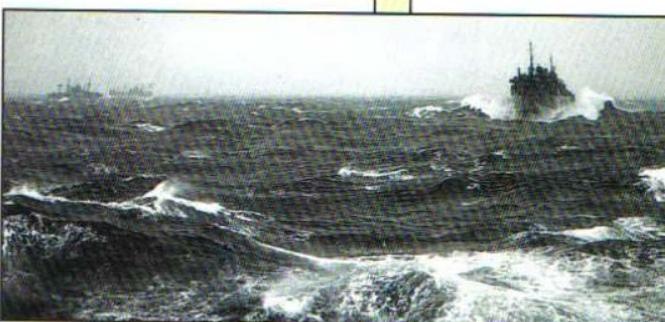
*Right: Bad weather was often the merchant sailor's friend, since it made it very difficult for the low-set U-Boats to manoeuvre into position for an attack on a convoy.*



escape a British aircraft, was rescued by a British warship. The submarine and the rest of the crew were never seen again.

Back in the submarine pens, the crew would emerge into daylight, filthy, bearded, bedraggled and malodorous. But the captain would have a white cover on his cap, the battle ensign would be snapping in the wind and everyone would be looking forward to leave. U-boat men partied hard in Paris, where wine and women were never in short supply for these much feted but ultimately doomed warriors of the Reich.

*Left: U-boat torpedoes were 7 metres long, 533 mm in diameter and weighed nearly two tonnes. They demanded regular maintenance checks to ensure their electrical systems were functioning properly. This was a tiresome job, especially when the reloads below the deck plates had to be winched up for testing.*

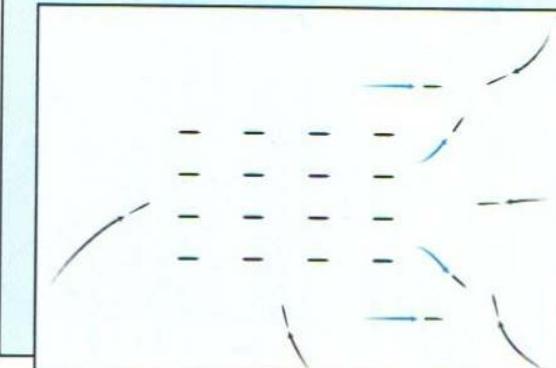


## Battle of the North Atlantic

British survival in the early years of the war depended upon a steady flow of supplies being maintained by convoys plying between the New World and the Old. The primary German weapon in the attempt to strangle this flow was the U-Boat, and the Kriegsmarine's submarine supremo, Admiral Karl Doenitz, well understood his priorities. An experienced World War I submarine commander, he had developed theoretical group tactics – the 'wolfpack' – even before his appointment in 1935, and once in charge of the German submarine force he was able to define the types of boat best suited to near and distant operations as well as the number required to beat a fully-organised convoy system. However, even after the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 had allowed the Germans quite generous limits to submarine construction, the Kriegsmarine's grandiose capital ship plans prevented their realisation. As a result, in place of the 300 boats Doenitz considered necessary, only 56 were in service at the beginning of the war, of which only 22 were of types capable of ocean service. For a time, losses exceeded commissioning so that, as late as February 1941, only 22 boats were actually operational. An unrestricted sinking policy was, Doenitz considered, legally justified with merchantmen escorted, armed and given instructions to ram on opportunity. The declared war zone first extended to 20 degrees West, about 500 miles west of Ireland. In the first months of the war, pickings were rich with merchantmen returning individually to the UK, while the major routes from the UK to Halifax and Sydney, Nova Scotia saw convoys escorted through only 15 degrees longitude from either end, due to lack of suitable escorts.

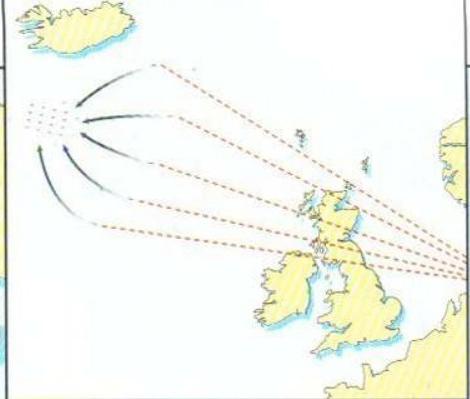


**EAST COAST KILLING GROUND**  
Slow American reactions to the U-boat threat once the USA joined the war left merchantmen sailing individually without escort, and until a proper convoy system was established the U-boats wreaked havoc on America's eastern seaboard.



**3** In the early days of the war, convoys were only lightly escorted. The first boats to attack drew off the escorts, leaving later arrivals, often attacking from a wide arc, a free run in on the hapless merchantmen.

**1** Once the FW 200s found a convoy, the big aircraft were used as orbiting beacons. By transmitting continuously they provided course data both to the high command and for the wolf-packs, which could home in on their transmissions.



**2** The Kriegsmarine kept tight control of its boats, maintaining regular radio contact. Allocated, position reports were sent to operational boats in the Atlantic, and the wolfpack gathered to attack.

#### RECONNAISSANCE LOOP

The FW 200s of KG 40 flew a giant loop from their base in France out over the convoy routes to their northern bases in Norway.

#### NORTHERN ROUTE

In an attempt to evade the marauding wolfpacks, British convoys were routed as far north as possible as they crossed the Atlantic. Convoys also followed zig-zag routes, radical changes of course in the night being designed to lose shadowing U-Boats.

**OCEAN HIGHWAYS**  
Convoy routes were linked like a network of ocean highways, each with its own identification code. The most important routes were those to and from Halifax in Nova Scotia, which were given OB/ONS and HX/SC designations.

#### U-BOAT PATROL LINE

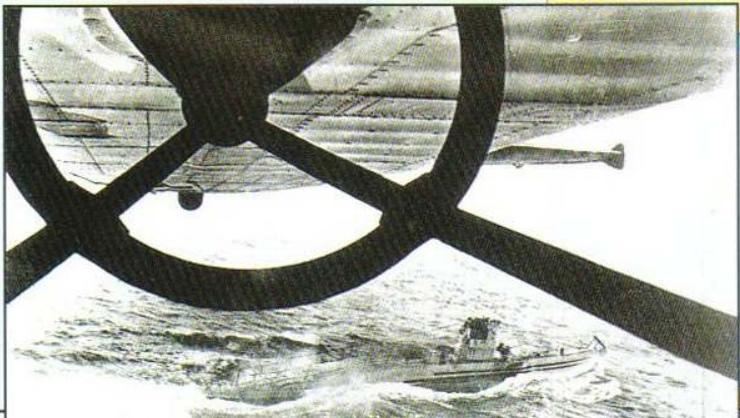
Doenitz deployed his forces in patrol lines across the likely convoy routes, covering the maximum amount of sea to ensure that Allied merchant vessels did not slip through the net.

**U-BOAT HQ**  
Operational control of the U-boat fleet was maintained from Wilhelmshaven, though Doenitz also had a forward headquarters at Kerneval, overlooking Lorient

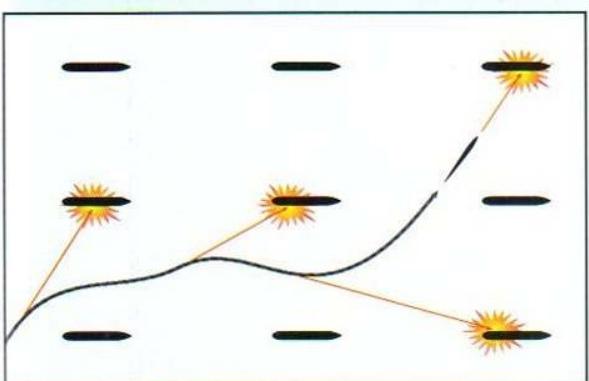
#### MARITIME RECONNAISSANCE

A key element in German plans were the Focke-Wulf FW 200 Kondors of I/KG40 based at Bordeaux-Merignac. These long-range aircraft could not only sink stragglers but also reported convoys to available submarines.

*Below: A Kondor belly gunner's view of an Atlantic U-boat rendezvous.*



**4** Early attacks were made from outside the convoy, with boats firing a fan of torpedoes. The best U-Boat commanders quickly discovered that a more lethal process was to get inside the convoy itself, attacking selected ships individually.

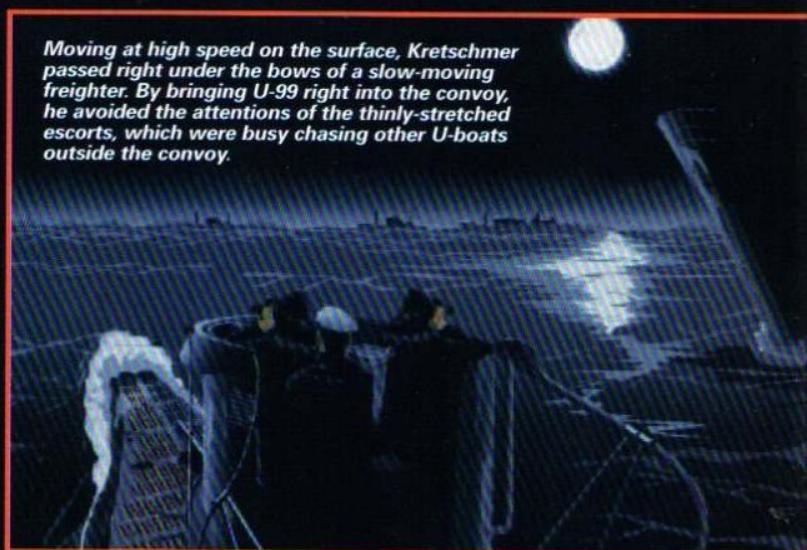


# ACE ATTACK ON CONVOY SC 7

Otto Kretschmer was the most successful U-boat ace of World War II, and one of the top submarine commanders of all time. He was the originator of many of the surface-attack night fighting tactics with which a few daring captains cut a swathe through Britain's Atlantic convoys. In the first 18 months of the war Kretschmer sank over 265,000 tonnes of Allied shipping before his own U-99 was damaged and forced to surrender in March 1941.

**1** The attack on the eastbound transatlantic convoy SC 7 was one of the most devastating of the war. On 18 October 1940 U-93 made a general signal giving the position, course and speed of a large convoy it had spotted. It tried but failed to shadow the convoy while all other U-Boats within range converged on the area. The convoy was next spotted by U-48 on the afternoon of 17 October; but by intercepting signal traffic the British knew SC 7 was being followed. The convoy made several violent course alterations, and U-48 lost contact too.

*Moving at high speed on the surface, Kretschmer passed right under the bows of a slow-moving freighter. By bringing U-99 right into the convoy, he avoided the attentions of the thinly-stretched escorts, which were busy chasing other U-boats outside the convoy.*



**2** Doenitz promptly ordered his U-boats to deploy into an 'interception stripe' across the probable course of the convoy. SC 7 eventually brushed the northern edge of the line, and as darkness fell the wolfpack pounced. Six U-boats, including Kretschmer's U-99 and Schepke's U-100 attacked at dusk. Kretschmer manoeuvred to aim at a ship on the edge of the convoy when the target suddenly exploded, torpedoed by another member of the wolfpack. A destroyer appeared just as U-99 and the nearby U-123 were closing in, and Kretschmer sped off into the darkness, returning to attack at 10pm.

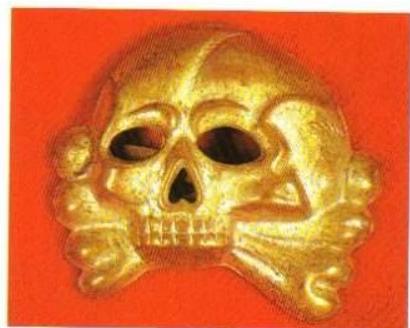


*Very few escorts at that time carried radar, so Kretschmer boldly sailed down the convoy lines on the surface. His prey was silhouetted in the moonlight while the small, low-set shape of U-99's conning tower was almost invisible against the night. He had successfully penetrated the escort screen, but after several torpedoes missed their intended targets at close range, Kretschmer aimed the rest by his own judgement, correctly assuming that the aiming director was faulty.*

**3** Kretschmer's primary targets were tankers: not only were their loads of oil vital to Britain's war effort, but they tended to be larger than other ships in the convoy. Above all, their volatile cargoes meant that they were most likely to be destroyed by a single shot, and Kretschmer, whose unofficial motto was "One torpedo...one ship" did not believe in wasting torpedoes.

**4** As the attack drew to a close, U-99 worked her way round to the rear of the convoy with the intention of expending her last torpedoes on a straggler. SC 7 lost 17 ships totalling nearly 80,000 tonnes that night, and Kretschmer and his crew had accounted for nine of them. It was one of the worst British convoy losses of the war – especially harrowing since eastbound convoys were loaded with the fuel and supplies Britain needed to survive in her lone stand against Hitler and the Third Reich. Kretschmer and U-99 returned to base at Lorient four days later to a heroes' welcome.

*When it came to sinking ships Otto Kretschmer was one of the most ruthless commanders ever to walk a bridge, but unlike some other U-boat commanders he always remembered that he was a seaman: once his targets were destroyed he would often pull alongside survivors, leaving them food and brandy.*



# DEATH'S HEAD

The piratical skull and crossbones or *Totenkopf* has become infamous as a symbol of the SS. But for Germans, the Death's Head has a much older history, rich in military associations.



*Left: Kurt 'Panzer' Mayer was the youngest divisional commander in the SS. Seen here as a Sturmbannführer on the Eastern Front, he is wearing an NCO-pattern 'crusher' field cap with an old Prussian-style Totenkopf.*

*Above: Right-wing Freikorps volunteers played a major part in the political unrest which followed Germany's defeat in World War I. A number of Freikorps units adopted the Death's head as a symbol.*



**D**eath's Heads were associated with the SS from the beginning of the Nazi period. The then-tiny formation which was Hitler's bodyguard wore them, to distinguish the chosen elite from the brawling mass of brownshirted SA stormtroopers. Totenkopfs adorned the smart uniforms of Hitler's Leibstandarte-SS guard during the party rallies of the 1930s, and were still being worn at the end of the war, as camouflaged Waffen SS soldiers made their last, futile defence of Berlin against the overwhelming might of the Red Army. But it was as the chosen symbol of the Totenkopfverbande – the concentration camp guards – that the Death's Head acquired its horrific associations.

### MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE

However, the Totenkopf was not chosen for its ghoulish appearance: rather it was a way of linking the SS with famous military units of German history. As a symbol of mortality, the skull and crossbones can be found on graves and headstones all over the world. It is also an ancient military symbol, since war is absolute and allows no half measures between defeat or victory. For the soldier, the Death's Head carries two messages – death or glory – and it consequently became the cap badge or insignia of élite formations which were prepared to fight to the death.

### HISTORICAL SYMBOL

In the 18th century the Prussian *Leib-Husaren* – the royal bodyguard – adopted black uniforms with a large Totenkopf badge on their fur busbies, in memory of King Fredrick William I. The Deaths Head Hussars were among the Prussian forces which proved decisive on the field of Waterloo. Troops from Brunswick also wore their own version of the Deaths Head.



Left: The black SS peaked service cap or Schirmütze was standard issue to all members of the SS in the mid-to late-1930s, though it was rarely worn after the outbreak of war. This is the NCO/other ranks version: officers wore a cap with braided chinstraps rather than the leather strap seen here.



Left: At the end of 1935 a grey-version of the Schirmütze was introduced for members of the Leibstandarte and other armed SS units. It became general from 1939, as the black SS uniform ceased to be worn.



Left: Collar patches of an Hauptsturmführer (Captain) of the 3rd SS Panzer Division Totenkopf. This was the only formation to use Death's Head collar patches: all other Waffen SS units had SS runes on their right collars.



Above: Although many brave men fought under the Totenkopf, it also presided over some of the war's most shameful deeds – as when SS troops massacred more than 70 Americans at Malmédy.

During World War I a number of German army units used the *Totenkopf* as a symbol, notably the 1st and 2nd Battalions of Infantry Regiment 17 and the 2nd Battalion of Cavalry Regiment 13. In the last year of the war, Stormtroopers and flamethrower units also went into battle under the Death's Head, as did the first German tank units. As a result the Death's Head was to become the standard insignia of German armoured troops during World War II.

In the chaotic conditions prevailing in Germany at the end of World War I, a number of

Freikorps units painted crude Death's Heads on their helmets and vehicles. The first Nazi unit to wear the symbol was the *Stosstrupp Adolf Hitler*, the leader's personal bodyguard established in 1923, which was to evolve into the SS. By using the *Totenkopf* they associated themselves not only with élite fighting units, but also with those they saw as holding the front line in the struggle against Bolshevism and Socialism.

### WAR SURPLUS

Initially the SS used war surplus examples of the original Prussian pattern *Totenkopf*, and continued to do so until 1934 when the newly expanded German army established its first Panzer units. *Panzertruppen* wore a black uniform, pink edged collar

patches and an aluminium Deaths Head in the Prussian pattern. It was then that the SS evolved its own variant, distinct from the traditional version used by the army. Other military units to sport Deaths Heads during World War II included the army 5th Cavalry Regiment, naval coast gunners in Danzig, and the Luftwaffe's Kampfgruppe 54.

*Left: Sepp Dietrich rose through the SS from being a street thug to command an Army Group. He is seen here in winter gear, with a 1934-pattern Totenkopf on his fur hat.*



42 HITLER'S THIRD REICH

# TOTENKOPF OF THE SS

When the *Stosstrupp Adolf Hitler* was formed in the mid-1920s as Hitler's body guard they adopted a black cap and distinctive insignia to set themselves apart from the brown ranks of the SA. The cap eagle held a *Totenkopf* in its claws rather than the red, black and white national cockade.

As the party expanded, the bodyguards provided the nucleus for a number of small protection squads which provided a party-wide security force. These *Schutzstaffeln* quickly became known as the SS.

Originally, the SS used the traditional Prussian pattern of Death's Head, but in 1934 a new design with a jaw bone was adopted to distinguish the SS version from those used by the Wehrmacht. This was initially made in coated

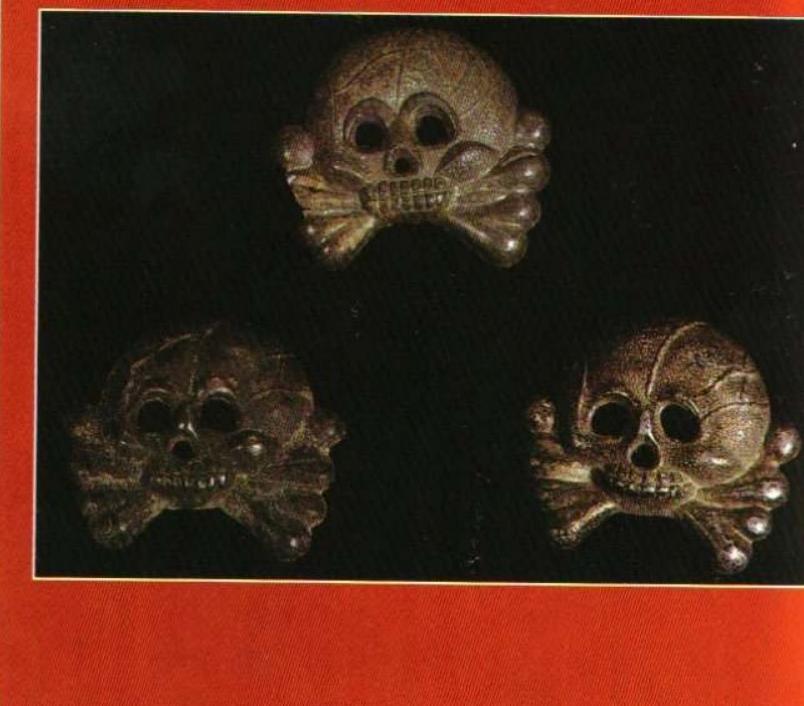
*Below: The first Death's Heads used by the SS were originally manufactured during World War I for some of the toughest, hardest fighting units of the Kaiser's army. These included storm troopers, early tank crews, and flamethrower troops.*

bronze, but later appeared in stamped aluminium, in zinc alloy, in cloth and in woven aluminium thread for the 1943 pattern combat caps. The *Totenkopf* also appeared on the SS trumpet banners, on drum covers, on SS rings, on daggers and on flags.

As the SS expanded it split into two. The Waffen-SS fought as soldiers in Russia, Italy and north west Europe.

The Allgemeine or General SS was the home-based service, and included the sinister *SS-Totenkopfverbande* (SSTV) who provided the guards for concentration camps and later for extermination camps.

The SSTV provided much of the manpower for the *Totenkopf* field division which was formed in 1939. Whereas most of the Waffen-SS wore the SS runes on the right collar patch and their rank on the other, the men of the *Totenkopf* division wore the Death's Head on their collars and as a cuffband to show their different origin.

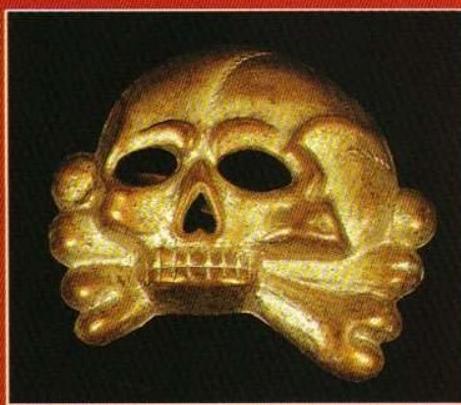




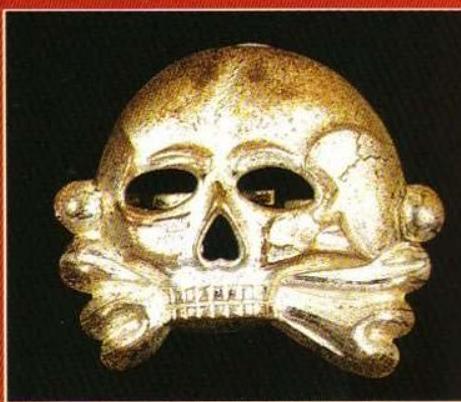
**Above:** Cloth badges were sewn onto SS field caps. The original pattern featured separate Eagles and Death's Heads; these one piece badges were designed for Tyrolean-style peaked caps worn from 1943.

**Below:** SS equipment did not come through the Army's supply system: orders were placed by the Reichszeugmeisterei der NSDAP, the Nazi Party's contracts office. All such items were marked with the RZM stamp.

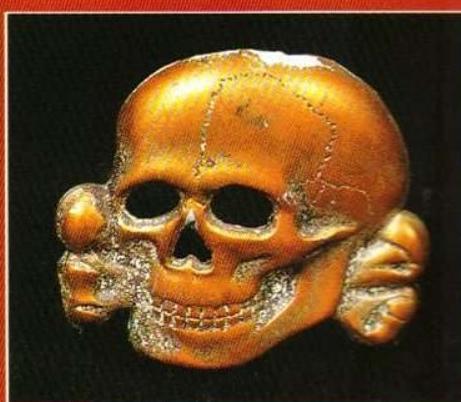
**Right:** The original Prussian-style Totenkopf was based on a jewelled Death's Head carried in the funeral procession of King Fredrick William I of Prussia, who died in 1740. The Totenkopf was adopted as a cap badge by the bodyguard of his son, Frederick the Great.



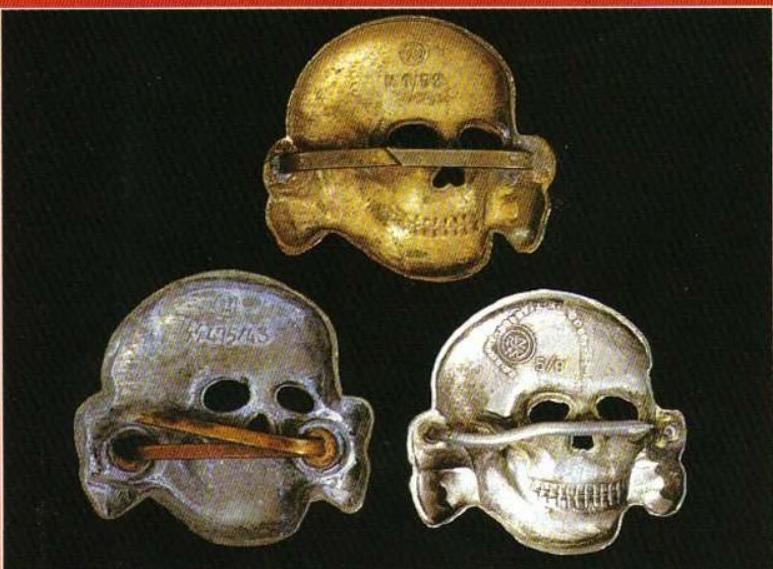
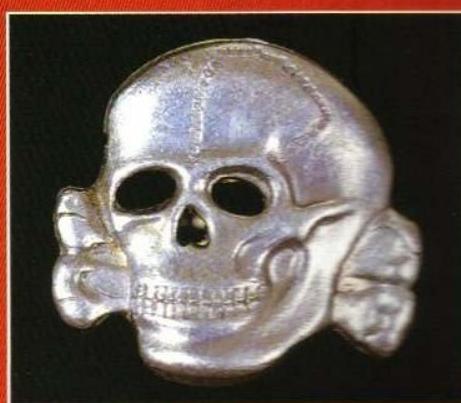
**Right:** The SS initially used World War I army surplus Totenkopf cap badges. As the organisation expanded, it needed new supplies. The Party ordered more from the Munich firm of Deschler, and many thousands were struck between 1923 and 1934.



**Right:** The unique SS-pattern Totenkopf appeared in 1934. More naturalistic in appearance than previous examples, its major difference was the addition of a lower jaw. The first SS Death's Heads were originally made in a bronze alloy and plated in silver.



**RIGHT:** As the war progressed, luxuries like silver-plated cap badges went by the board, and the SS Totenkopf began to be made much more simply and cheaply. Late-war Death's Heads were stamped out of aluminium or zinc-based alloys.



# A Z OF THE THIRD REICH

## Abwehr (Abw)

For many years the only rival of the SS intelligence departments, the Abwehr (strictly, the Amt/Ausland Abwehr) was the foreign and counterintelligence department of the OKW (*Oberkommmando der Wehrmacht* or High Command of the Armed Forces) which dealt with espionage, counter-espionage and sabotage. From 1935 the Abwehr was directed by Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. It was soon in conflict with Heydrich's SD, which had established its own foreign intelligence branch. In the early years of the war the military organisation fiercely maintained its independence from the SS,

protecting the Wehrmacht from the excesses of the Gestapo. However, the Gestapo gained the upper hand early in 1944, when it established that senior Abwehr officers were actively involved in resistance to Hitler. Canaris himself was arrested after the 20th of July plot, the Abwehr being absorbed into the SS RSHA soon after. Canaris was hanged in 1945, less than a month before the end of the war.

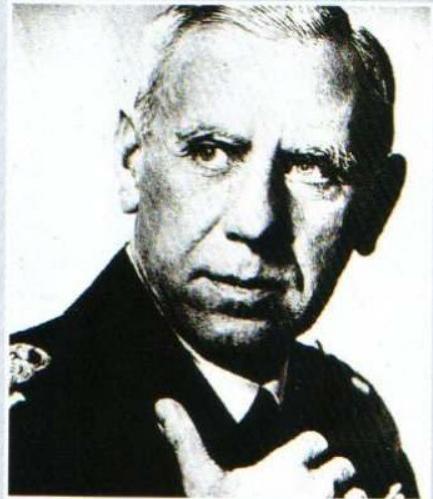
**See also** Inside the Third Reich

Issue 3: Gestapo

Issue 8: SD

Issue 9: RSHA

*Right: Admiral Wilhelm Canaris was head of the Abwehr, the military intelligence service, for most of the Nazi period. For much of that time he was in polite but intense rivalry with his sometime protégé Reinhard Heydrich, who headed the Nazi security apparatus. Canaris was an opponent of Hitler, although until the plot to assassinate the Führer he managed to avoid doing anything which might have led to his arrest.*



## Afrika Korps

The German expeditionary force which fought in North Africa from 1941 to 1943, latterly as the main operational unit of *Panzerarmee Afrika*. For much of its existence the Afrika Korps was commanded by General (later Field Marshal) Erwin Rommel. Intervening in north Africa to shore up the failing Italian forces, the Afrika Korps took part in the back and forth series of battles irreverently known to British soldiers as the 'Benghazi handicap'. In 1942 the Germans were close to outright victory, being poised to drive on Cairo and the Suez canal, but British Empire forces were saved from defeat by German shortages of fuel, serviceable tanks and supplies. Following defeat at El Alamein on 23 October 1942 the Afrika Korps began a slow withdrawal, though early in 1943 the German veterans administered a stinging defeat on inexperienced US troops at the Kasserine Pass. Driven back into Tunisia, the Afrika Korps finally surrendered in May 1943.

*Panzers of General Erwin Rommel's (inset) Afrika Korps drive toward the important British base of Tobruk, which was captured in June 1942.*

**See also** Hitler Diary

Issue 15: Adventures in Africa

**See also** Hitler's Battles

Issue 9: Tobruk



## Adolf Hitler Schule

The Adolf Hitler schools were established in 1936 to train the next generation of Nazi leaders. Boys between the ages of 12 and 18 were chosen from the Hitler Youth; they were examined for their racial origins and Aryan appearance and put through a two-week selection camp. Training at the schools was regimented, with pupils in squads rather than classes. Staff supervised every stage of the day. In the early days five daily sessions of physical training contrasted with one and a half

periods of academic work, which included politics and current affairs. Students graduated at 18 and were considered qualified for university, though particularly favoured pupils went on to one of the SS *Ordnungsbürgen* or 'Order Castles'. During the war a more conventional curriculum was introduced.

*Senior members of the Hitler Youth were chosen to attend the Adolf Hitler Schule, where they were trained as future leaders of the Nazi Party.*



# Ahnenerbe Forschungs-und Lehrgemeinschaft

The 'Ancestral Heritage Society' was founded in 1935 on the instructions of Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, with a brief to research the mystical origins of the 'Aryan' race. The Ahnenerbe was under the control of Richard Darré, the head of the SS Race and Resettlement Bureau and a leading proponent of the 'blood and soil' ideology which permeated the more lunatic fringes of the Nazi state. Before the war the Ahnenerbe conducted legitimate if rather fanciful research and archaeological excavations in the field of German pre-history. One area close to Himmler's heart was the study of Germanic runes.

Other Himmler favourites to which the Ahnenerbe devoted entire departments included homeopathic medicine and the virtues of vegetarianism. During the war the Ahnenerbe was involved in criminal medical and racial experiments on concentration and extermination camp victims, and at the end of the war even found itself in control of the V-2 ballistic missile programme.

*The Hitler Youth memorial on the island of Rügen in the Baltic is built in the archaic style and has a quasi-runic inscription inspired by the archaeological and cultural ideas of the Ahnenerbe.*



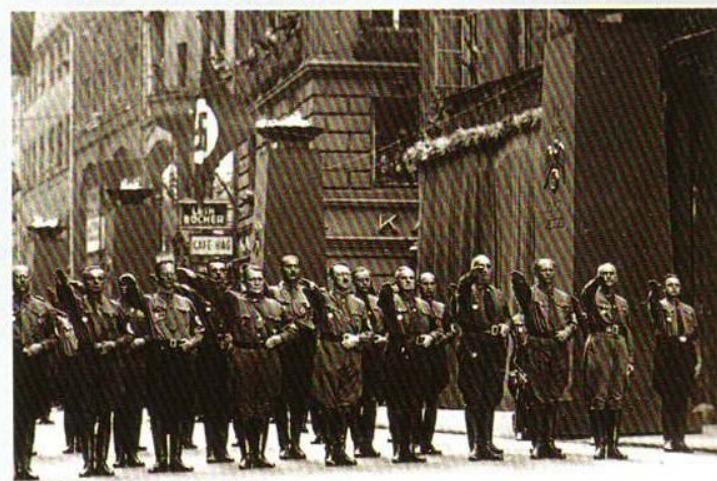
## Alte Kämpfer

Literally 'Old Fighters' – the early members of the Nazi Party, especially those who had marched alongside Hitler in the abortive Munich putsch of 1923. Most of the Alte Kämpfer were from working-class backgrounds, war veterans who had difficulty adjusting to peace-time life in Germany. Those who had been injured in street fights against the Communists before the Nazis came to power received the same benefits as disabled war veterans.

Even though the majority of these men were little more than street thugs, Hitler often spoke of them with affection, looking back

to the beginnings of the struggle in Munich as the 'good old days'. He gave them preference for jobs in the bureaucracy, and some rose to positions of considerable influence. These included Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's official photographer, and Max Amann, Hitler's sergeant-major in the trenches of the World War I who used his position as the Führer's business manager to become a millionaire publisher.

*Adolf Hitler joins Hermann Goering and fellow Alte Kämpfer in the annual march to commemorate the failed Munich Putsch of 1923.*



## Anschluss

The Anschluss, or union between Germany and Austria, took place in March 1938. The Austrian-born Führer of the Third Reich had pressed for such a union for many years – in fact, it was referred to in the very first paragraph of *Mein Kampf* as a "task to be furthered by every means as long as we live". His coming to power in Germany in 1933 at last gave him the means to create a greater German state. Nominally a union of two sovereign nations, it was more of an invasion and annexation by the Germans, though with the support of a significant part of the Austrian population. Nicknamed the *Blumenkriege* or

'flower war', it was engineered by Nazis within the government of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss, who was replaced in a bloodless coup by Austrian Nazi leader Artur Seyss-Inquart. At his invitation the German army occupied the country before any opposition could be mounted. Following the Anschluss Austria was incorporated into Greater Germany and renamed Ostmark.

*Germany's bloodless occupation of the ancient state of Austria meant that Hitler now controlled territory on three sides of his next targets: the Sudetenland and Czechoslovakia.*



## Anti-semitism

Anti-semitism has existed in Europe since before the Middle Ages but only in Nazi Germany did it become one of the driving forces of a modern state.

Modern anti-semitism was primarily a product or perversion of the ideas of 19th Century Romanticism. Central to the Romantic ideal, fuelled by folklore, tradition and myth, was the notion of the nation, race or *völk*.

The Jews were already the victims of church-inspired persecution, but their differences in dress, in language, in customs and in culture made them obvious aliens in European society, and as such presented a ready-made enemy for the new racists.

German anti-semitism also fed in part on envy at the commercial success of the more assimilated sector of European Jewry, who were closely associated with the growth of capitalism and the social evils which it engendered.

Anti-semitism was given a pseudo-scientific respectability by the turn-of-the-century writings of people like the Frenchman Arthur

Comte de Gobineau and the Briton Houston Stewart Chamberlain, whose ideas fell on fertile ground with the extreme nationalists who arose in Germany and central Europe at the beginning of the 20th Century. It became the central plank on which the nascent National Socialist party stood in the years following World War I.

Immediately on coming to power in 1933, the Nazis enacted anti-Jewish legislation, confiscating property and depriving Jews of civil rights. In 1938, the assassination of a Nazi diplomat in Paris was the excuse for the infamous Kristallnacht, which saw attacks on Jewish synagogues, shops and homes all over the Reich.

German anti-semitism was taken to the ultimate extreme in the 'final solution' to the 'Jewish question', which led directly to the holocaust and the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

**See also The Holocaust**

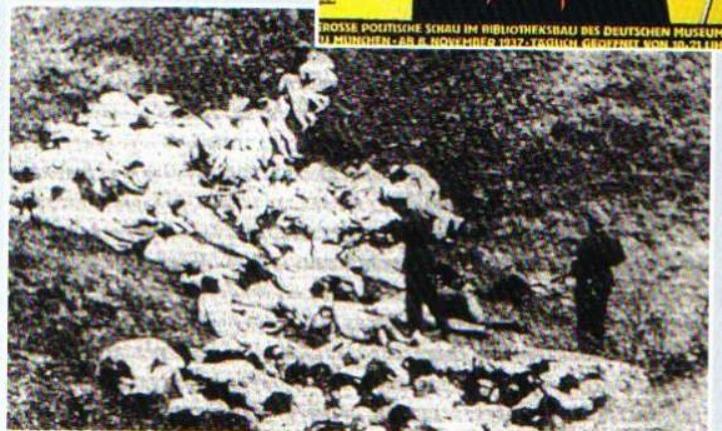
**Issue 5: Krystallnacht**

**See also Hitler Diary**

**Issue 9: Building the Nazi State**

**Right:** *Der Ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*), a 1940 'documentary' filmed in the Lodz ghetto, depicted Jews as cellar rats who, if not eliminated, would take over the world.

**Below:** It was in the east that the ultimate expression of anti-semitism got underway. Here, members of an SD Einsatzgruppe shoot survivors of a massacre of Jews in the Ukraine.



## Art

Although never more than a journeyman draughtsman, Adolf Hitler thought himself a talented artist. He loathed the modernists who had revolutionised art and who dominated the Viennese art schools to which he had applied in vain before World War I. Once in power in Germany, he was in a position to see that his own ideas of art prospered.

Through the varied means of Alfred Rosenberg's Combat League of German Culture and Goebbels' Reich Chamber of Culture the Nazis imposed rigid controls over all art in Germany – and as is so often the case under dictatorships, the only good art was realistic art. No angst or negative feeling was allowed: by far the most acceptable subjects were heroic treatments of soldiers, sailors and SA stormtroopers, and bucolic peasant scenes. Sculpture by men like Professor Thorak and Arno Breker tended to the classical and massive.

A four-man committee headed by Professor Adolf Ziegler toured galleries all over the Reich, ordering the removal (and in some cases the destruction) of 'degenerate' art – including works

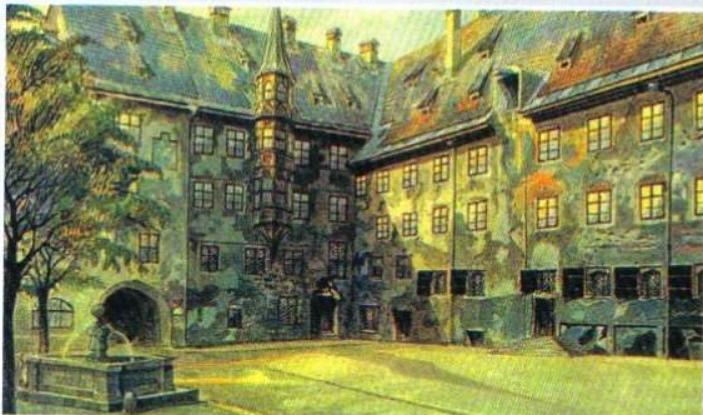
**Right:** Hitler's own work gives a fair idea of what he liked in painting: competent but uninspired representational art.

by modern masters like Kokoschka, Grosz, Klee, Ernst Picasso, Cezanne, Gauguin, de Chirico and many others.

All degenerate or decadent art was condemned – though when a 'degenerate art' exhibition was held in Munich it drew two million visitors, five times as many as the concurrent exhibition of approved works in the nearby *Haus der Deutschen Kunst*. The prevailing climate meant that many talented artists left for the United States and Britain.

Later the Nazi hierarchy ran riot through occupied Europe, looting the great collections as well as the private collections of wealthy Jewish families.

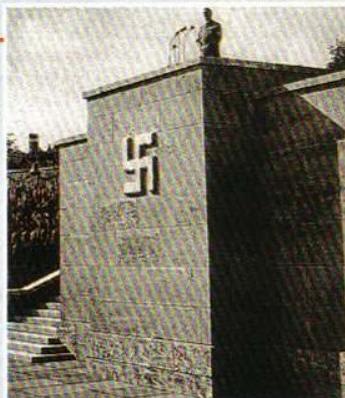
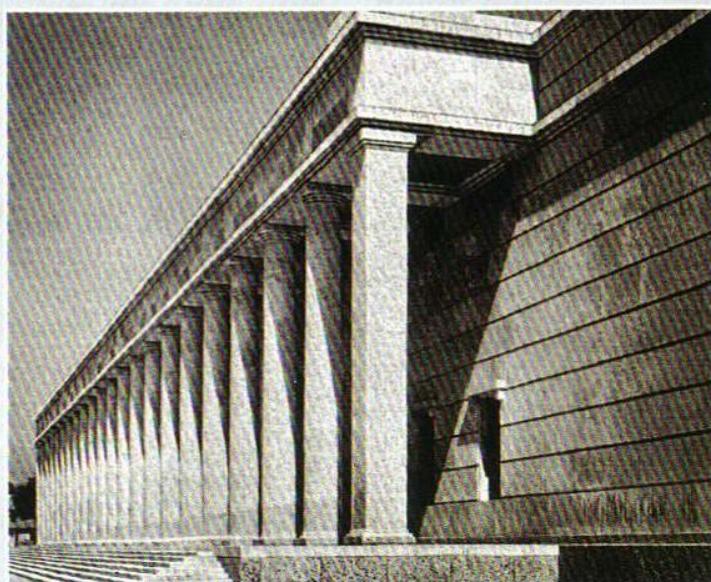
**Right:** Professor Thorak was the leading exponent of the 'bigger is better' school of sculpture. Here he works on the scale model of a monument to celebrate the building of the autobahns. The finished work was to have been at least three times larger!



## Architecture

Hitler repeatedly expressed the view that had he not become a politician he would have been an architect. Initially Paul Ludwig Troost and later Albert Speer became his favoured architects in grandiose but never-built schemes for German cities, most notably the capital Berlin though he also had plans for Linz in Austria, his home town.

The Olympic stadium for the XI Olympiad as well as numerous public buildings exemplify Nazi architectural values. It is clear that Hitler favoured a massive overpowering neo-classical style. Such was the scale of Nazi building that vestiges of such grandiose projects still survive in Germany, in spite of post-war efforts at destruction.



Nazi architecture took nothing from the influential German modernists of the 1920s, preferring a heavy, stolid neoclassical style which found expression in buildings like the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich (left) and the Luitpold-Arena on the site of the party rallies in Nuremberg (above).

## Atlantis

German commerce raider, also known as Ship 16 and Raider C. *Atlantis* was a modified merchantman of 17000 tonnes built by Vulkan of Bremen. Commissioned in 1939, *Atlantis* bore a close resemblance to a number of Norwegian, Dutch, Soviet and Japanese vessels, a resemblance which was used to good effect in surprise attacks on British and Commonwealth shipping. The raider carried two Heinkel floatplanes and had a main armament of six 15-cm guns taken from the old battleship *Schlesien*. Under the command of Captain Bernhard

Rogge, she sailed on a raiding mission in March 1940 which was to last 622 days and cover 185000 km. Preying on British vessels sailing unaccompanied in the South Atlantic, the *Atlantis* sank 22 merchant ships totalling nearly 146000 tonnes. While refuelling two U-boats on 22 November 1941 she was intercepted and sunk by the 8-inch guns of the heavy cruiser HMS *Devonshire*.

*The heavily-armed Atlantis was typical of the disguised German commerce raiders which prowled the oceans early in the war.*



## Auschwitz

Built in marsh land 150 miles from Warsaw on the site of a former Polish army barracks, Auschwitz was initially set up as a concentration and prisoner of war camp in 1940, but went on to become the heart of a massive complex supplying slave workers for much of the upper Silesia industrial area.

It was the largest such complex in the whole concentration camp system, with some 400,000 prisoners being registered in the five years of its existence. About half of these were worked to death, a much higher proportion than at camps like Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen.

Auschwitz III at Monowitz, about three kilometres to the east was the main slave labour camp, which also controlled most of the

40 sub-camps in the mines and factories of the region.

But the real horror was Auschwitz II at Birkenau, about a kilometre to the west of the original site. The largest of the camps, in the summer of 1941 it became a *Vernichtungslager* or extermination camp under its commandant Rudolf Höss. It was here in September 1941 that Zyklon-B poison gas was used for the first time.

With four gas chambers and crematoria it became a true factory of death. It is hard to establish an exact figure for numbers of Jews, gypsies and other nationalities killed before the camp was overrun by the Russians in 1944, but current estimates range between 1 and 1.3 million.



*Millions of victims passed through Auschwitz, which was the largest concentration and labour camp in the Nazi system in addition to being the ultimate death camp.*

<b>See also</b> The holocaust
Issue 1: Selected to die
Issue 2: Death factory
<b>See also</b> Nazi Horrors
Issue 3: Concentration camps

## Autarkie

Even the conquest of much of Europe left the greater German Reich short of some strategic materials, and *Autarkie* (autarchy) was the name by which the German drive for economic

self-sufficiency was known. Headed by Wilhelm Keppel, Hitler's special economics adviser, the programme oversaw the production of the *ersatz* (replacement) range of goods for

civil and military use.

Probably the most important was Buna, or synthetic rubber, produced by IG Farben – the first factory was at Auschwitz and used slave labour. IG Farben also

developed a technique for extracting oil from coal. The most memorable, or notorious product of the drive for autarchy was the bitter ersatz coffee, which was made from acorns.

## Autobahn

The Autobahns were Europe's first multiple-lane highways, and were seen as one of Nazi Germany's greatest pre-war achievements – even though they had been planned under the Weimar Republic, and the first such highway, between Cologne and Bonn, was completed in 1932, the year before the Nazis came to power.

Hitler's government was quick to see the political and military value of a modern road network and immediately set out to build a further 11000 km, 30,000 men being committed to the task. Built primarily for the rapid movement of troops, each autobahn had

four eight-metre-wide traffic lanes, ideal for high-speed road transport or the movement of large military convoys.

The massive programme became a major stimulus to the German economy, and was a real source of pride to the general working population. However, less than 3000 km had been built by the time war broke out in September 1939.

*Cheered by huge crowds, Hitler's motorcade ceremonially inaugurates the Strassen des Führers between Frankfurt-am-Main and Darmstadt. It was completed in 1935.*



## Axis Pact

The 'Pact of Steel' was a ten-year treaty of military and economic co-operation signed in May 1933 between Nazi Germany and Italy. The two fascist dictatorships pledged to come to each other's aid in the event of a war with any third party. The treaty linking Berlin and Rome was likened to the axis between two wheels, hence the more familiar name of the alliance.

With the signature of the Tripartite Pact in September 1940 Japan joined the Axis, thanks primarily to Hitler's assurance that if the USA fought Japan,

Germany would side with her against the USA. In December 1941 the Imperial Navy's attack on Pearl Harbor led the USA to declare war on Japan, and true to his word (an unusual occurrence, as Neville Chamberlain would have testified) Hitler declared war on the USA.

But unlike the Anglo-American alliance, which quickly created a unified high command, the Axis partners never worked out a real common strategy, and they could not hope to match the military, industrial and economic power of the Allies.



*Left: General Tojo of Japan was an ally, but could do little but offer moral support since Japan was really fighting a separate war in Asia and the Pacific.*

*Above: Germany and Italy were nominally equal partners, but superior German military power made Hitler the dominant force once war broke out.*

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Millions worked to death

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Hitler Youth:  
Creating a Nazi Future



## A-TO-Z OF THE THIRD REICH

# FUTURE ISSUES OF **HITLER'S** **Third Reich** **WILL FEATURE**



## HITLER DIARY

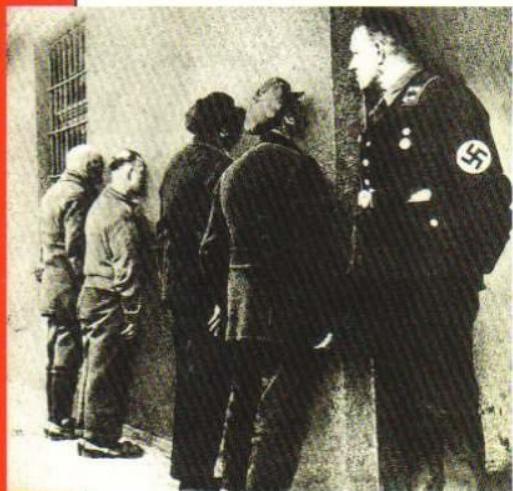
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## HITLER'S BATTLES

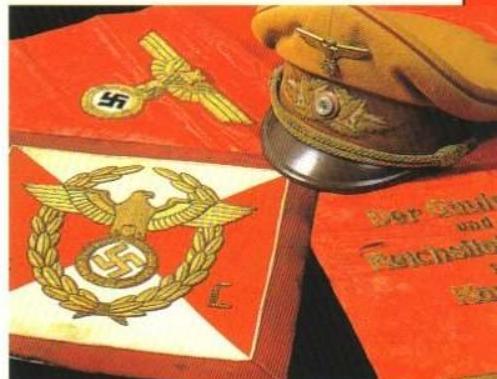
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Everyday life in Hitler's Germany

## NAZI SYMBOLS

Badges, Uniforms, Flags and Insignia of the Third Reich



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